NATION

18 farmers arrested in Haryana for stubble-burning

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BUSINESS

Karan's Dharma sells 50% stake to Adar for ₹1,000 cr

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SPORTS

Deepika bags her 5th silver at Archery WC

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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India-China agree on LAC patrolling

It is part of the resolution to a 4-yr standoff

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

India on Monday announced it has arrived at an agreement with China on patrolling in remaining friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, in a major breakthrough in the festering row that came following a series of negotiations between the two sides over the last few weeks.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri indicated that the agreement will lead to disengagement and a resolution of the issues that had arisen in 2020.

It is understood that the agreement pertains to patrolling in Depsang and Demchok areas.

"Over the last several weeks, Indian and Chinese diplomatic and military negotiators have been in close contact with each other in a variety of forums," the foreign secretary said at a media briefing.

"As a result of these discussions, agreement has been arrived at patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China border areas, leading to disengagement and a resolution of the issues that had arisen in these areas in 2020," he said.

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in the standoff since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points.

The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas. —*PTI*

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in the standoff since May 2020 **PHOTO: PTI**

FORCES WILL AVENGE WORKERS' DEATHS IN J&K: LG

SRINAGAR, 21 OCT

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said security forces will avenge the construction workers' death in the brutal attack in Ganderbal, and "extract a price" that the terrorists will remember for time to come.

Sinha called for justice to the victims as he blamed Pakistan for "still trying to kill innocent people" in the region to disrupt peace. He also directed officials to provide financial assistance to the victim families.

Seven people including a local doctor and six non-local labourers were killed while five others sustained injuries in the terror attack Wednesday at an under-construction tunnel at Gund in Ganderbal district.The LG said there was still a threat from the "neighbouring country". "It is still trying to kill innocent people in this region and to destabilise peace here," he added at the Police Martyrs' Day function.Sinha said there was a need to stop drug smuggling and improve counterinsurgency operations. —*PTI*

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CM Siddaramaiah & Home Minister G Parameshwara with kin of martyred cops during Police Commemoration Day **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

100 new police stations to be set up at ₹200 cr: CM

BENGALURU, 21 OCT

- The Chief Minister also announced opening seven new public schools and promised setting up more such institutions. He assured the policemen that State will provide all necessary facilities

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday announced that 100 new police stations would be established in the state, while 10,000 police quarters would be constructed by 2025 at an estimated cost of Rs 200 cr and Rs 2000 cr respectively.

Today, on "Police Commemoration Day" Siddaramaiah paid homage to 216 policemen brave police personnel who sacrificed their lives for the country last year, including the 12 martyrs from Karnataka.

The Chief Minister also announced opening seven new public schools and promised setting up more such institutions in the coming years. Underscoring the importance of law and order to maintain peace in society, Siddaramaiah said peaceful society attracts investment, creates more job opportunities, increases per capita income and improves the economy.

To curb unlawful activities and for quick response in the event of accidents, 200 vehicles are patrolling Highways, and 6,000 CCTV cameras are used for monitoring public spaces, he informed the gathering. On the occasion, the CM assured the policemen that the state government will provide them with all necessary facilities. —*PTI*

Wangchuk ends fast on Ladakh row

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk on Monday ended his fast along with others, after the Home Ministry assured them that the talks on Ladakh's demands will be resumed in December. Join Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, Prashant Lokhande met the activists, who were sitting on an indefinite fast at Delhi's Ladakh Bhawan since 6 October, and handed them a letter from the home ministry. The letter said the high-powered committee of the ministry, which was holding talks with representatives from Ladakh, will meet them next on 3 December. —*PTI*

Delhi air quality drops to 'very poor' level

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

A thin layer of smog engulfed the national capital with Air Quality Index (AQI) dropping to 349 at 8 am on Monday, categorized as 'Very Poor.' AQI recorded at Shakurpur and the surrounding areas in the capital city was recorded as 346 categorized as 'Very Poor', as per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Surrounding areas near India Gate recorded an AQI of 309, categorized as 'Very Poor.' Also, the air pollution has increased the number of patients suffering from respiratory issues by nearly 10 to 15 per cent. —*PTI*

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Flight bomb threats: Govt plans legal actions

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

The government is planning legislative actions to deal with bomb threats to airlines, including placing the perpetrators in the no-fly list, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said on Monday and asserted that efforts are being taken to tackle the situation without compromising passengers' safety and security.

Amendments are being proposed to The Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Civil Aviation Act (SUASCA), 1982 whereby the perpetrators could be arrested and probe can be initiated without a court order for offences when an aircraft is on the ground.

Nearly 100 flights have received bomb threats in one week, with at least 8 of them getting diverted, and also causing hardship to hundreds of passengers as well as sending security agencies into a tizzy.

The civil aviation ministry is planning to amend the aircraft security rules as well as SUASCA.

Currently, the aviation norms mainly pertain to dealing with in-flight offences.

At a briefing in the national capital, Naidu said the aircraft security rules will be amended to strengthen them and once the perpetrator of a bomb threat to a flight is caught, the person will be placed in the no-fly list.

SUASCA deals with many offences such as those committed at airports, onboard an aircraft and disruption to air navigation facilities.

Most of the bomb threats, which later turned out be hoaxes, were issued through social media. —*PTI*

Pannun **PHOTO: X**

Don't take AI flights from 1-19 Nov: Pannun

Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun has issued a threat against international travellers flying with Air India ahead of the 40th anniversary of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Pannun, the founder of Sikhs for Justice warned of attack on an Air India flight from 1-19 November. He is a designated a terrorist by India.

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BENGALURU'S WATER PARK

Kids enjoy a waterlogged park in Ejipura, Koramangala, as heavy rains cause flooding across Bengaluru **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

WB doctors end hunger strike after 15 days

KOLKATA, 21 OCT

Agitating junior doctors on Monday evening withdrew their fifteen weeks-long hunger strike over the RG Kar incident, hours after a meeting with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The medics also called off their proposed strike across hospitals in the state on Tuesday.

"In today's meeting (with the CM), we did get the assurance of some directives, but the body language of the state government was not positive. The common people have wholeheartedly supported us. They, as well as the parents of our deceased sister (RG Kar hospital victim), have been requesting us to call off the hunger strike, keeping in mind our deteriorating health.

"We are therefore withdrawing our 'fast-unto-death" said Debashish Halder, one of the junior medics. The decision was taken following a general body meeting of the doctors. The two-hour meeting took place on Monday evening at the state secretariat, Nabanna, marking the first time discussions between the protesting doctors and the Chief Minister were streamed live. —*PTI*

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Probe Khalistan link in blast: Delhi cops to Telegram

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Delhi Police probing a possible Khalistani link in the blast near a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) school here on Monday wrote to messaging app Telegram to know the details of a group that claimed responsibility of the explosion, police sources said on Monday.

A strong blast ripped through a wall of the CRPF school in Rohini's Prashant Vihar area on Sunday morning. No one was hurt in the blast but a signboard, hoardings of nearby shops and window panes of vehicles parked near the spot were damaged in the incident.

A copy of which has been accessed by PTI, police has mentioned a "white powder found scattered" at the site and said the explosion was caused by "unknown explosive substance". Meanwhile, police sources also said they have recovered CCTV footage of a suspect from the night before the incident.

A purported Telegram post circulated on social media, which claimed that the blast was carried out in retaliation to the "targeting" of pro-Khalistan separatists allegedly by Indian agents. The post surfaced on social media late on Sunday evening pointing to the possible involvement of pro-Khalistani separatists behind the blast. A Telegram post by "Justice League India" read, "If Indian coward agency and their master think they can hire filthy goons to target our members to silence our voice then they live in fools world. They can't imagine how close we are to them and how capable we are to strike anytime #KhalistanZindabad #JLI." —*PTI*

'DON'T THROTTLE STUDENTS'

SC stops K'taka from declaring class 8-10 board exam results

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Supreme Court on Monday pulled up the Karnataka government for 'harassing' students by conducting board exams for different classes, and restrained it from declaring results of board examinations of classes 8, 9 and 10 till further orders.

A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Satish Chandra Sharma directed that if the exam has not been conducted in any district, then it shall not be taken.

"Why are you harassing the students? You are the State. You should not behave like this. Don't make it an ego issue. If you are really concerned about the welfare of students, then please open good schools. Don't throttle them," the bench told senior advocate Devadatt Kamat, appearing for the Karnataka government.

Supreme Court **PHOTO: PTI**

The bench said no other state follows this model of education which is being followed by the Karnataka government.

Kamat said that the state government has withdrawn a circular for conducting board examinations for students of classes 5, 8, 9 and 10 in the current academic year in seven rural districts of the state. The top court was informed that examination was conducted in 24 other districts as well. It asked the State government to file an affidavit giving the exact details of the examination in four weeks. High Court's division bench had permitted the State government to conduct the board exams for different classes for the academic year 2023-24, overruling 6 March order of a single judge's bench. —*PTI*

SC refuses to stay Grade-1 posts' exam in Telangana

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Supreme Court on Monday refused to stay the examination being conducted by Telangana Public Service Commission (TGPSC) to fill up 563 Grade-1 posts in various government departments, saying such an order will lead to "chaos".

"The examination will commence at 2 pm. There will be chaos if we stay the exam at this stage," a bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, had said during the hearing earlier when senior lawyer Kapil Sibal, appearing for a petitioner, pressed for an interim stay. "These are Group-1 posts and they will never be filled again. I am only asking for postponement," the senior lawyer urged the bench.The CJI, however, said, "How can we postpone? It will be extraordinary for us to do that." Group-1 mains examination conducted by the TGPSC commenced on Monday and will continue till 27 October for 563 vacancies.

PHOTO: PTI

Candidates have been protesting against the GO seeking rescheduling of the examinations on the ground that SCs (scheduled castes), STs (scheduled tribes) and backward classes suffer under its reservation provisions. —*PTI*

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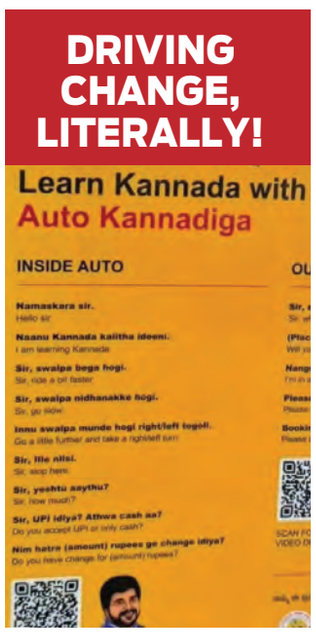
YOU DON'T WANT SECULAR INDIA: SC ON PLEA TO AMEND PREAMBLE

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

The Supreme Court stated that Secularism is integral to the basic structure of the Indian Constitution while hearing petitions from former Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy and others challenging the inclusion of "Socialist" and "Secular" in the Preamble. Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Sanjay Kumar emphasised that previous judgments affirm secularism as a core feature linked to equality and fraternity.

During the hearing, Justice Khanna told a counsel, representing one of the petitioners, "You don't want India to be secular?" The terms were added in the 42nd Amendment in 1976, altering the description of India from a "Sovereign, Democratic Republic" to a "Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic." Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain argued that BR Ambedkar believed adding "Socialism" would limit personal liberty, while Justice Khanna noted that socialism could also mean equal opportunity and wealth distribution. Advocate Ashwini contended that while he didn't oppose the terms' inclusion, he challenged the retrospective effect of their amendment. Swamy claimed the Preamble, established on 26 November, 1949, should not be altered arbitrarily. The bench plans to further examine the matter on 18 November. —*PTI*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Learn Kannada with
Auto Kannadiga
INSIDE AUTO
Namaskara sir.
Hello sir
Naanu Kannada kaliththa ideeni.
I am learning Kannada
Sir, swalpa bega hogi.
Sir, ride a bit faster.
Sir, swalpa nidhanakke hogi.
Sir, go slow.
Innu swalpa munde hogi right/left togoli.
Go a little further and take a right/left turn
Sir, illi nilsi.
Sir, stop here.
Sir, yeshtu aythu?
Sir, how much?
Sir, UPI idiya? Athwa cash aa?
Do you accept UPI or only cash?
Nim hatre (amount) rupees ge change idiya?
Do you have change for (amount) rupees?

An auto driver's unique initiative – "Auto Kannadiga" helps commuters learn basic Kannada on the go. ***PHOTO: X***

Heavy rains catch City off guard again

India Meteorological Department issued yellow alert for both Bengaluru Urban and Rural

Vehicles move on a waterlogged road after heavy rain in Austin Town, Bengaluru, on Monday; A commuter struggles to get into an auto; An uprooted tree poses a threat to commuters on Rest House Road, Bengaluru ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD***

BENGALURU, 21 OCT

Amid the heavy downpour in the City, residents of many flood-affected areas have taken to social media to pour out their woes ranging from water-logging to complaining about "crumbling" infrastructure.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow alert for both Bengaluru Urban and Rural for Monday.

The administration has declared a holiday for schools following heavy stagnation of water at crucial junctions of the city like the Silk Board, making going from one place to another almost impossible.

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, for its part, has issued an advisory urging people to "stay indoors, close windows and doors and avoid travel if possible".

But these announcements came under criticism from netizens as in some parts of Bengaluru the sun shone brightly.

Although, those in affected areas have posted videos and photos of their inundated roads and service roads, justifying the need for holiday and the work-from-home option.

Climate scientist Pradeep, who keeps a tab on rains in Bengaluru, via @Bengalururain, has observed that such morning thunder-storms in October are rare. "Some parts of West Bengaluru crossed 60mm. However, it appears to have slightly weakened," he posted on his X page Bengaluru Rain Alert.

One of the X users, Dr Rajath Athreya (@FoolzWizdom), a neonatologist from Bengaluru had posted videos from Outer Ring Road (ORR).

"This is now on a stretch of ORR, which doesn't usually get inundated. Anyone that does not need to be out on the roads please do not venture out," he commented.

The official handle of Citizens Movement, East Bengaluru also questioned the never-ending taxes imposed on citizens while giving them subpar infrastructure.

"If the government can't maintain the Silk Board, one of the Char Dhams of #Bengalurutraffic... why dream of imposing new taxes in Bengaluru," the handle posted along with videos of inundated Silk Board junction.

Some have also questioned the wisdom of declaring a holiday after 8am, when most school students would already be in their schools or would have been on their way.

Another X user @itsKingAppu has posted videos from near Bellandur complaining that while it is impossible to step out from his home, his company refused to let him work from home.

Meanwhile, those who ventured out faced massive traffic jams, especially near Old Madras Road. *—PTI*

2 boys drown in Mandya's Madduramma lake

MANDYA, 21 OCT

Two teenage boys drowned in Madduramma Lake in Deshalli Village, Maddur Taluk, on Sunday evening, police said. The victims, Muturaj, 14, and Ranju, 17, were from Shankarapura village. Three other boys alerted the villagers, after which the Besagarahalli Police rushed to the scene. The bodies of the teenagers were recovered on Monday morning. A case has been registered at the Besagarahalli Police Station in Maddur Taluk. ***—Salar News***

2 die in bike collision in Chamarajanagar

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 21 OCT

Two bikers died on the spot in a collision on Sunday evening near Chowdahalli in Gundlupet taluk of Chamarajanagar district. According to the police, the deceased have been identified as Shivaiah, 56, from Chowdahalli village, and Ajith, 22, from Hundipur village, both in the same taluk. Another person, Chandu, who sustained critical injuries, was shifted to the district hospital for treatment. ***—Salar News***

High Court rejects PIL seeking RaGa's apology

BENGALURU, 21 OCT

High Court dismissed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on Monday that sought an apology from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for allegedly tarnishing the dignity of Indian women. The petition stemmed from Gandhi's claims during a public speech that former Janata Dal (Secular) MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of rape and sexual abuse, had "raped 400 women and filmed the act," labelling it as "mass rape" rather than a mere sex scandal. A bench comprising Chief Justice NV Anjaria and Justice K Aravind found the petition to be without merit, declaring it a waste of judicial time. The court imposed a fine of Rs 25,000 on the petitioner, the All-India Dalit Action Committee, for filing the plea. The petitioner's counsel argued that Gandhi's remarks were irresponsible and offensive, particularly towards the women of Hassan. He requested the court to issue a notice to Gandhi, compelling him to respond to the allegations. The counsel labelled Gandhi a "serial offender," referencing previous controversial statements he made and citing pending citizenship issues before the Delhi High Court as further evidence of misconduct. ***—PTI***

Ahead of bypolls, BJP leader Yogeeshwara resigns as MLC

HUBBALLI, 21 OCT

BJP leader CP Yogeeshwara on Monday resigned as the Member of the Karnataka Legislative Council, to contest the November 13 Assembly bypoll from Channapatna segment.

With the BJP ceding Channapatana seat to alliance partner JD(S), the actor-turned-politician said he plans to contest as an independent, and would take a final call, after consulting his supporters and workers, even as he appealed to coalition leaders to consider giving him a ticket from the saffron party.

Channapatna will go for bypolls along with Sandur and Shiggaon Assembly segments --where BJP has already announced candidates.

CP Yogeeshwara ***PHOTO: X@ELECTORAL_EDGE***

Channapatna bypoll is necessitated as the seat fell vacant following the election of its representative -- JD(S) state president and now Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy -- to Lok Sabha from Mandya parliamentary segment.

Speaking to reporters here, after tendering his resignation, he said he plans to contest as an independent candidate, as he had contested and won in the past, and will take a final call based on what his supporters and workers say.

BJP has said that Channapatna candidate would be announced by Kumaraswamy, as the seat was represented by him, which dashed the hopes of Yogeeshwara, who had openly claimed that he will be the alliance candidate.

Meanwhile, R Ashoka, Leader of Opposition in Assembly, on Monday, dismissed the reports of a tussle between the BJP and the JD(S) over the Channapatna Assembly seat for the coming by-election.

"I discussed this with Kumaraswamy for 2 hours. He is a good friend; there is no problem," Ashoka told ANI. *—PTI*

MOUND OF MESS

Heaps of garbage were left uncleared near 80 Feet Road in Koramangala, Bengaluru, on Monday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

CONG CANDIDATE LIST FOR BYPOLLS ALMOST READY: DKS

BENGALURU, 21 OCT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday said the state unit of the Congress has almost finalised the candidates for by-polls for three Assembly segments, and the list will soon be sent to high command to decide.

Ministers have been given responsibilities to ensure that the party wins the by-polls in all the three seats, said Shivakumar, who is also Congress state president.

Sandur, Shiggaon and Channapatna assembly segments will go for bypolls on November 13.

DK Shivakumar ***PHOTO: PTI***

"We have almost finalised (on candidates), we have sought the opinion of our ministers. They have been given the responsibilities...we will send our proposal to Delhi (high command), they will discuss and decide," Shivakumar said while speaking to reporters here.

He said he cannot divulge as to how many names of probable candidates will be recommended to high command for each seat.

Stating that party workers were demanding a ticket for his brother DK Suresh from Channapatna, Shivakumar said, "I have told them that we will abide by the party high command. I have not yet come out from the shock of the Lok Sabha poll loss (Suresh loss), but we are not ready to give up serving the people." Suresh, too, on Sunday had said that there is pressure on him to contest elections. *—PTI*

POLL PREP

AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan (right) at a meeting ahead of Maharashtra Assembly polls with Chairperson of Congress Parliamentary Party Sonia Gandhi, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and others in New Delhi on Monday ***PHOTO: SALAR***

HC denies bail to Prajwal in rape case

BENGALURU, 21 OCT

The Karnataka High Court on Monday rejected the bail plea of former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, who faces charges of rape and sexual assault.

Justice M Nagaprasanna also rejected two anticipatory bail pleas of the former Hassan MP.

In August 2024, the Special Investigation Team, which is probing four cases of sexual assault and harassment against Prajwal. The chargesheet relates to a case where Prajwal is accused of raping a woman who worked as domestic help for his family. *—PTI*

File contempt case against minister: Abraham to Guv

BENGALURU, 21 OCT

Activist TJ Abraham on Monday said he has appealed to Karnataka Governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot to direct the Advocate General to consider his appeal to initiate contempt of court proceedings against Karnataka Minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan. If the AG did not heed to the appeal, the governor should remove him from his post, Abraham said.

The activist is one of the three petitioners in the MUDA site allotment case, who had sought prosecution of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Abraham alleged that Khan had called the High Court order, which allowed a probe against Siddaramaiah, a political judgment.

"After the High Court order related to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Karnataka Housing and Waqf Minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan openly called it a political judgment before you all," the activist told reporters after meeting Gehlot at Raj Bhavan.

"According to the Contempt of Court Act, on September 27 we sent a notice to the Advocate General. The AG must give his consent. There are two questions before the AG –whether he would stand in favour of the government or the judiciary," he explained. Calling a court order a political judgment is a contemptuous statement, Abraham said. He stated that the AG did not respond even after a month. *– PTI*

FORMER-COP TO BE QUESTIONED IN MUDA SCAM

MYSURU, 21 OCT

Retired IAS officer S Palaiah, a member of the Land Grabbing Prohibition Special Court and a former Headquarters Assistant of Mysuru, is set to be questioned by Lokayukta officers as part of their investigation into the Mysuru Urban Development Authority scam. Palaiah, who was responsible for overseeing government land during his tenure, is under radar for his alleged involvement in the scandal.

The Lokayukta has already questioned A Devaraju, a landowner, and Mallikarjuna swamy, the brother-in-law of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who are listed as Accused No. 4 and 3. *—Salar News*

Centre of Excellence in FinTech announced

BENGALURU, 21 OCT

The Karnataka Department of Electronics, IT, BT, and Science & Technology has announced the establishment of a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in FinTech, in partnership with IIM Bangalore's with Nadathur S Raghavan Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (NSRCEL), aimed at fostering innovation and supporting startups in the state's growing financial technology sector. The CoE will focus on incubation, acceleration, skill development, and sandbox environments for real-world testing, including regulatory sandboxes. With a budget of Rs 13.24 crore over five years, Rs 8.19 crore is allocated for incubation and acceleration, and Rs 5.04 cr for skilling and training programmes. NSRCEL, IIM Bangalore's non-profit business incubator, will lead the CoE as the implementing agency, the department said. The Karnataka Innovation & Technology Society will provide financial support. Minister for IT and BT, Priyank Kharge, emphasized the CoE's role in accelerating FinTech growth and preparing a skilled workforce for the digital economy, supporting the state's broader digital economy goals, positioning Karnataka as a frontrunner in the sector. *—PTI*

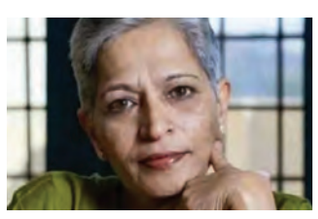
Sule hits out Sena over 'removal' of Gauri murder case accused

MUMBAI, 21 OCT

NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule on Monday claimed the ruling Shiv Sena "removed" an accused in the journalist Gauri Lankesh murder case from the party fold temporarily until elections are over.

Amid backlash, the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday stayed the appointment of the accused, Shrikant Pangarkar, to any post in the party in Jalna district.

Pangarkar, who was granted bail by the Karnataka High Court in September, joined the Shiv Sena on Friday in the presence of party leader and former minister Arjun Khotkar, ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly polls.



Gauri Lankesh ***PHOTO: PTI***

A statement from the Shiv Sena on Sunday said that if Pangarkar has been given any party post in Jalna district, the decision has been stayed.

Sule stated that the so-called action of Shiv Sena vis-a-vis Pangarkar was limited to the election period.

"An accused in the Gauri Lankesh murder case was inducted into the party (Shiv Sena) and has been removed. But this would not suffice. The veil of morality has been lifted just for the election time. After polls, such goons will be inducted again," Sule tweeted on X. Lankesh was shot dead outside her home in Bengaluru on 5 September, 2017. A probe by police in Karnataka with assistance from agencies in Maharashtra led to the arrest of several persons. *—PTI*

SURPASSES NAT'L AVG

State registers 10.2% GSDP growth in 2023-24

BENGALURU, 21 OCT

Karnataka registered a robust 10.2 per cent GSDP growth in 2023-24, significantly surpassing the national average of 8.2 per cent, according to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). Initially, the National Statistical Estimate (NSE) had projected a modest 4% growth for the state, but this was later revised to 13.1 per cent, reflecting better-than-expected economic performance despite severe challenges like the worst drought in a decade and a global IT market slowdown.

The state's agriculture sector contracted due to drought conditions, while its heavy reliance on the IT and hardware sectors—making up 28 per cent of its Gross State Value Added (GSVA)—left it vulnerable to global downturns. IT industry growth slowed from 15.5 per cent in FY 2022 to 8 per cent in FY 2023.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Looking ahead, the NSE forecasts 9.4 per cent GSDP growth for Karnataka in FY 2024-25, slightly below the national projection of 10.5 per cent. However, the Ministry of Finance is more optimistic, projecting 14 per cent growth, citing strong fiscal indicators. As of September 2024, the state saw a 10% year-on-year increase in GST collections and a 24 per cent rise in stamp duty revenue. Karnataka's per capita GSDP remains among the highest in the country, bolstered by Congress-led governance and pro-people policies. *—PTI*

5 Naxalites killed in encounter in Gadchiroli district

GADCHIROLI, 21 OCT

Five Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district on Monday, police said. The gunfight, in which commandos of the C-60 specialized combat unit of the Gadchiroli police played a leading role, took place in a forest in Bhamragadh taluka in the eastern Maharashtra district and comes just one month ahead of the state assembly polls. A press release issued by the office of the Gadchiroli Superintendent of Police said in view of elections, a group of Naxalites gathered was planning an attack. *—PTI*

EC appoints Ajay Singh as new DGP in Jharkhand

NEW DELHI/RANCHI, 21 OCT

Election Commission on Monday appointed Jharkhand cadre senior-most IPS officer Ajay Kumar Singh as the state DGP, sources said, days after the poll panel removed Anurag Gupta as the acting police chief. An officer of the 1989 batch of the Indian Police Service, Singh was selected from a panel of three IPS officers whose names were sent by the state government. The names were sent after the poll authority on Saturday ordered the removal of acting DGP Anurag Gupta due to his "history" of election-related misconduct in previous polls. Singh was made the state's DGP in February 2023 after the retirement of his predecessor Neeraj Sinha. Singh's appointment last year ended the row over the appointment of the state's DGP as the Supreme Court had in January 2023 disposed of a contempt petition against the Jharkhand government and former police chief Neeraj Sinha. *—PTI*

PM's degree: SC upholds summons against Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a plea filed by former Delhi Chief Minister and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal challenging an order of the Gujarat High Court refusing to quash summons in a defamation case over his alleged remarks over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's educational qualification. A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and SVN Bhatti noted that a separate bench of the apex court had junked the plea filed by AAP leader Sanjay Singh on 8 April in the same case. "We must have a consistent approach," said the bench. Gujarat High Court had on 16 February dismissed the pleas of Singh and Kejriwal seeking quashing of the summons issued against them in the case. Both politicians had challenged in the high court the summons issued by a trial court in the case filed by Gujarat University and dismissing their revision pleas against the summons. *—PTI*

ED raids ex-YSRCP MP, others over fraud land sale

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Enforcement Directorate Monday said it has seized more than 300 sale deeds of properties "acquired" by former YSRCP MP MVV Satyanarayana and some others, apart from 'benami' land passbooks, following raids against them in an Andhra Pradesh government land grab case. The federal agency conducted searches against the former legislator and an auditor, Gannamaneni Venkateswara Rao, on 19 October at five locations in Visakhapatnam. Satyanarayana was a YSRCP MP from 2019 to 2024. The case pertains to a 12.51-acre land (with a market value of more than Rs 200 crore) that was allotted by the state government for creating housing projects for old-age people and orphans. FIR was filed at Arilova police station in Visakhapatnam charged Satyanarayana, Rao and, Gadde Brahmaji, for "forging" , "fabricating" sale documents and using "coercion" to "grab" land. *—PTI*

Must refuse talks with Pak till it stops attacks: Farooq

Amit Shah says fight against terror, infiltration to continue

SRINAGAR, 21 OCT

Former chief minister and National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Monday lashed out at Pakistan for perpetrating terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, saying Islamabad will have to stop terror incidents here if it wants to have friendly relations with India.

Abdullah said there can be no talks between New Delhi and Islamabad till the neighbouring country stops killings in Jammu and Kashmir.

"I do not know what action India should take, that is the domain of the central government. It is a problem for us and we have been going through it for years now. I have been seeing it for 30 years now. I have told them many times to stop it but their thinking is like that only.

"How can there be talks? You kill our innocent people and then you call for talks. First stop the killings," Abdullah said while commenting on the terror attack at a construction site in Ganderbal district on Sunday.

Relatives & locals offer prayers during funeral of doctor Shahnawaz, who was killed in a terrorist attack in J&K's Ganderbal on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Seven people were killed while five others sustained injuries in the attack.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said the fight against terrorism, infiltration and conspiracy to create religious tension will continue even though the country has established relative peace in Jammu and Kashmir, the Northeast and Naxal-affected areas.

"In the last 10 years, relative peace has been established in Jammu Kashmir. However, our fight is not over. We will continue to fight against narcotics, cybercrime, conspiracy to create religious tension, infiltration, and terrorism among others. *—PTI*

Security forces launch combing ops; protests held

SRINAGAR, 21 OCT

Security forces launched a large-scale combing operation in the area adjacent to tourist spot Sonmarg on Monday, a day after a horrific terror attack at a tunnel construction site in Jammu and Kashmir's Ganderbal claimed seven lives.

National Investigation Agency (NIA) agents scoured the scene for crucial evidence as army, CRPF, and police units spread out across the hills surrounding the construction area to track down the perpetrators and their accomplices involved in one of the deadliest attacks on non-local labourers in the Kashmir valley.

The officials said CCTV footage from the area is being scrutinised.

The Resistance Front, a shadow organisation linked to the banned Lashker-e-Taiba, has claimed responsibility for the barbaric act.

Protests against the killings also erupted in various parts of Kashmir, with demands for justice for the victims and calls to end terrorism. Demonstrations were held in solidarity with the victims, emphasising a united stance against violence and terrorism.

The biggest protest march was held at Pulwama where youth held placards demanding an end to the bloodshed. *—PTI*

J&K victims' families recall last moments before terror attack

JAMMU, 21 OCT

Dressed in her finery, she waited for the phone to ring so she could break the Karwa Chauth fast she had kept for his long life. What came instead was the pronouncement of his death - Shashi Abrol had been killed in a terror attack in Kashmir's Ganderbal district.

"I spoke to him in the evening. He didn't mention any threats. I was going to the temple as part of my Karwa Chauth fast, and we had a brief conversation. I tried calling him after I returned but he didn't pick up. After that, his phone was switched off," a sobbing Ruchi told PTI.

"I waited for his call but had no idea about the attack," she added at her home in Jammu's Talab Tillo area, her mother-in-law by her side.

Another victim, Gurmeet Singh, was speaking to his wife on the phone when he was hit by a bullet, his father said on Monday.

Another relative said Gurmeet was the breadwinner of the family and urged the state government to extend all possible support to them. The son of Dr Shahnawaz Dar, expressed sadness over his father's death and said that his father had wanted him to become a doctor, but his death has shattered his dream. *—PTI/ ANI*

MAHARASHTRA POLLS

MVA has decided on 210 seats: Raut

MUMBAI, 21 OCT

Maha Vikas Aghadi has reached consensus on 210 of the 288 assembly seats in Maharashtra, which is a "significant achievement", Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said on Monday.

The aim is to ensure the defeat of forces looting Maharashtra, he said in a swipe at the ruling alliance comprising Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena, BJP and Ajit Pawar-led NCP.

"We have arrived at a consensus on 210 seats. It is a significant achievement. We aim to contest polls as a joint force and we will defeat the forces looting Maharashtra," Raut, a Rajya Sabha MP and key strategist for the Shiv Sena (UBT), told reporters.

Meanwhile, allies Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) have met NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar and held deliberations.

MVA sources on Sunday said a seat-sharing deal is likely to be sealed in a day or two after arriving at consensus. *—PTI*

Sanjay Raut **PHOTO: PTI**

Bid to include bogus voters to be contested by BJP: Saamana

Ahead of the Maharashtra assembly polls, the Opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) on Monday alleged there were attempts to include bogus names in the voters' lists across 150 assembly constituencies which it claimed BJP was planning to contest. The administration has foiled an attempt to insert such 6,853 "bogus" names in the voters' list in Rajura assembly segment. "The party workers are using Aadhaar card of people who reside in Madhya Pradesh or Chhattisgarh to include their names."

Saini keeps home, finance in Cabinet

CHANDIGARH, 21 OCT

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini kept key departments, including home and finance, while Anil Vij got energy and transport as portfolios were allocated to the Council of Ministers on Sunday, three days after the swearing-in of a new government in the state.

Saini will handle 12 portfolios. Besides home and finance, he is also in charge of planning, excise and taxation, town and country planning and urban estates, information, public relations, language and culture, criminal investigation, law and legislative, and housing for all departments.

Vij, who held the home portfolio when Manohar Lal Khattar was the chief minister, has now also been given the charge of the labour department, in addition to energy and transport.

Sanjay Raut **PHOTO: PTI**

Rao Narbir Singh has been allotted industries and commerce, environment, forests and wildlife departments while Mahipal Dhanda got the school education department.

Meanwhile, Congress leader captain (retd) Ajay Singh Yadav on Monday raised concerns about under-representation of OBCs in the party's Haryana unit and top bodies such as the CWC, while also lashing out at the AICC in-charge of state Deepak Babaria over the poor assembly poll showing *—PTI*

Haryana polls expression of stability: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Monday that the Haryana poll result has reinforced people's message of stability that was visible in his government's return to power for the third straight term at the Centre, comments which came as he prepares to spearhead BJP's campaign in the Maharashtra and Jharkhand assembly polls.

—PTI

Can't expect all demands to be met: Didi

KOLKATA, 21 OCT

The meeting between West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and agitating junior doctors on Monday lasted nearly two hours, discussing various demands of the medics, including the prevailing "threat culture" in the state's hospitals, to resolve the impasse stemming from the rape and murder of a doctor at RG Kar Hospital in August.

During the talks, held on the 17th day of a fast-unto-death by some protesting doctors, which was streamed Live for the first time from the state secretariat-Nabanna, Banerjee urged the junior doctors to end their fast, stating that most of their demands had been addressed, while rejecting the one on removing the state health secretary.

Mamata Banerjee **PHOTO: PTI**

- Although both sides agreed on the prevailing threat culture, they differed on the underlying premises, forces, and situations that promote it

Although both sides agreed on the prevailing threat culture, they differed on the underlying premises, forces, and situations that promote it.

"If you start an agitation, you should know how to end it. It is not right to assume that all your demands will be accepted," Banerjee said.

Promising to look into their demands, she requested the doctors to convince their colleagues to withdraw the fast and rejoin duties. *—PTI*

J&K CM Omar resigns from Budgam, retains Ganderbal

SRINAGAR, 21 OCT

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah resigned from the Budgam assembly seat and retained the Ganderbal constituency, National Conference's (NC) bastion, Pro-tem speaker Mubarak Gul announced in the House on Monday.

Abdullah had won both the Budgam and Ganderbal seats in the recently held assembly polls. He won the Budgam seat by a margin of 18,485 votes against Peoples Democratic Party's Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi. While in Ganderbal, he defeated PDP's Bashir Ahmed Mir by 10,574 votes.

National Conference leader was administered the oath of office and secrecy by the LG Manoj Sinha at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) in Srinagar. Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary took oath in English.

After taking the oath, Omar Abdullah received a guard of honour at the Civil Secretariat in Srinagar and held his first maiden meeting with secretaries of various departments.

There are 51 first-time members including BJP MLA from Kishtwar Shagun Parihar, who is the youngest member at 29. The NC veteran and MLA from Chrar-e-Sharief, Abdul Rahim Rather, is the oldest at 80. *—ANI/ PTI*

AMID PLUMMETING BIRTHRATE

Stalin, Naidu want people to have more kids

AMARAVATI/ CHENNAI, 21 OCT

Flagging Andhra Pradesh's falling birthrate, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has called on women in the state to bear at least two children to stabilise its population, remarks welcomed by the AP Congress unit while ruling TDP's rival, YSRCP questioned the CM's 'vision' on the matter.

South India was witnessing an aging problem, Naidu said, adding each woman should give birth to more than two children in their lifetime.

Noting that the southern state's birth rate has plummeted to 1.6, he feared the continuation of the current situation could lead to further decline of the birthrate to 1 or lower, where only "old people will be visible in the society".

Unlike earlier times when he restricted government benefits to families with more members, the CM promised to reverse those norms and extend more benefits to families with more members.

Meanwhile, TN CM Stalin said the Lok Sabha delimitation exercise may make people to think about raising "16 children," alluding to a Tamil saying.

He was alluding to a Tamil saying "pathinarum petru peru vazhvu vazhga," meaning acquire 16 different kinds of wealth and lead a prosperous life, while referring to the census and delimitation process which will redraw the electoral map of India.

"The Parliament delimitation process may encourage the couples to have many children and give up thoughts of a small family. But whatever be the outcome, provide Tamil names to your children. In the past, the elders used to bless the newly married couples to acquire 16 kinds of wealth (pathinarum petru peru vazhvu vazhga) including fame, education, lineage, wealth, and not 16 children. Gradually, people have come to believe in raising a small family for prosperity, he said. *—PTI*

AP CM Chandrababu Naidu & TN CM MK Stalin **PHOTO: PTI**

Don't take law in your hands: Revanth to public

HYDERABAD, 21 OCT

Expressing concern over the recent desecration of an idol at a temple here, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday said people should not take law into their own hands, but repose faith in the police to ensure action against the culprits.

In an apparent reference to a crowd allegedly seeking to vandalise a hotel at Secunderabad here where the accused in the idol desecration incident stayed, he appealed to the people of Telangana to exercise restraint and cooperate with the government when some people try to damage public properties.

Revanth Reddy **PHOTO: PTI**

"If anyone tries to take law into their hands or try to punish those who committed a wrong, there will be not much difference between the culprits of such crimes and those seeking to take law into their hands. So, police personnel are ready to take tough action against the perpetrators of crimes. No one needs to have doubts on this," he said. *—PTI*

Expelled Indian envoy denies role in Nijjar killing

VANCOUVER, 21 OCT

India's high commissioner to Canada has denied any involvement in the murder of a Canadian Sikh leader who was killed in British Columbia last year even though the Canadian government has named him as a person of interest in the assassination.

Sanjay Kumar Verma, who was expelled last Monday along with five other Indian diplomats, said in an interview on CTV's Question Period Sunday that the allegations are politically motivated.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police went public this week with allegations that Indian diplomats were targeting Sikh separatists in Canada by sharing information about them with their government back home. They said top Indian officials were then passing that information to Indian organized crime groups who were targeting the activists, who are Canadian citizens, with drive-by shootings, extortions and even murder.

"Nothing at all," Verma said when asked if he had any role in in the shooting of Hardeep Singh Nijjar who was killed outside a cultural centre in Surrey, British Columbia on June 18, 2023. "No evidence presented. Politically motivated."

Four Indian nationals living in Canada were charged with Nijjar's murder and are awaiting trial.

Verma denied the Indian government was targeting Sikh separatists in Canada.

"I, as high commissioner of India, have never done anything of that kind," he said.

Verma also pushed back on comments made by Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly that compared India to Russia.

India has repeatedly criticized the Canadian government for being soft on supporters of what is known as the Khalistan movement, which is banned in India but has support among the Sikh diaspora, particularly in Canada. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Coldplay row: PIL seeks rules against black marketing

MUMBAI, 21 OCT

A PIL has been filed in the Bombay High Court seeking guidelines to curb black marketing and ticket scalping at major events, in the backdrop of alleged foul play during the online tickets' sale for British band Coldplay's highly anticipated concert in Navi Mumbai in January 2025. The plea was mentioned on Monday for urgent hearing before a division bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar. The public interest litigation (PIL), filed by advocate Amit Vyas, said there are several irregularities and illegalities during the sale of tickets for major events, such as concerts, live shows and so on. Such irregularity was witnessed last month when tickets for the concert were made available on the BookMyShow platform, he claimed. *—PTI*

Court grants interim bail to UAPA accused

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Delhi's Karkardooma Court has granted an interim bail of eight days to an accused in a larger conspiracy of Delhi riots 2020 registered under UAPA. Accused Shadab Ahmad sought an interim bail for a period of 20 days on the ground of the marriage of his younger sister in Uttar Pradesh on 2 November. Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai granted interim bail to Ahmed on the grounds of wedding. The court said, "Considering the fact that the applicant has to attend the marriage of his real sister, the court deems it justified that the applicant is granted the desired relief. Accordingly, the application is allowed." The court noted that the accused was arrested in the present case on 20 May, 2020, and since then he has been in judicial custody. *—ANI*

Kerala allocates funds for social security pensions

T'PURAM, 21 OCT

Carrying out its welfare initiatives, the LDF government in Kerala allocated funds on Monday for disbursing one month of social security pensions to 62 lakh people in the state. In a statement, Kerala Finance Minister KN Balagopal said that around 62 lakh pensioners would receive Rs 1,600 each within this week. Despite financial challenges, the government is committed to ensuring the timely distribution of monthly welfare pensions, he added. For 26.62 lakh people, the amount will be transferred directly to their bank accounts, while the others will receive it through cooperative banks, with the payments delivering to their homes. *—PTI*

Woman kills self as spouse arrives late on Karva Chauth

JAIPUR 21 OCT

A woman committed suicide following which her husband also hanged himself to death in shock after the couple had an argument over him coming home late on the night of Karva Chauth, police said on Monday. The incident took place in Harmara area on Sunday when Ghanshyam Bunkar, 38, came home late at night leading to a verbal spat with his wife Mona, 35, they said. According to police Mona left home in a fit of rage around 12.30 am and Ghanshyam also followed her. Shortly after that, the wife jumped in front of a moving train and shocked by her death the husband returned home and hanged himself while their two children were sleeping in a separate room. Before killing himself, he sent a message to his brother on informing about his wife's suicide. *—PTI*

18 farmers arrested in Haryana for stubble-burning

Meanwhile, Delhi air quality drops to 'very poor' level

CHANDIGARH, 21 OCT

Eighteen farmers were arrested in Haryana's Kaithal district over the past felkkw days for burning stubble in their fields, a police official said on Monday, as pollution levels in the region, including the national capital, soar.

Stubble-burning in Haryana and neighbouring Punjab is often blamed for the rise in pollution levels in Delhi, especially during the post-harvest season of October and November.

"During the past few days, fourteen farmers were arrested for burning stubble, but they were later released on bail as the offence is bailable," Kaithal's Deputy Superintendent of Police (Headquarters) Birbhan said over the phone.

Cases have been lodged under the provisions of Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act and other relevant provisions of the law for burning stubble, he said.

A volunteer presents a flower to a commuter during the launch of 'Red Light On, Gaadi Off campaign' by Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai to curb air pollution on Monday PHOTO: PTI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday pulled up the Punjab and Haryana governments over the non-prosecution of those found guilty of stubble-burning. It has summoned the chief secretaries of the both states to appear before it on October 23 for an explanation.

A bench of justices Abhay S Oka, Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Augustine George Maish pointed out "complete insensitivity" on the part of the two states, directing the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to take penal action against their government officials for the failure to take action against the violators.

Delhi air quality drops to 'very poor' level

A thin layer of smog engulfed the national capital with Air Quality Index (AQI) dropping to 349 at 8 am on Monday, categorized as 'Very Poor.'

AQI recorded at Shakurpur and the surrounding areas in the capital city was recorded as 346 categorized as 'Very Poor', as per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Surrounding areas near India Gate recorded an AQI of 309, categorized as 'Very Poor.' Meanwhile, toxic foam was seen floating on the Yamuna River as the pollution levels in the river continued to rise.

Dr Rajesh Chawla, senior consultant at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital's critical care for respiratory diseases and sleep medicine department, informed that the air pollution levels seem to be rising faster than before, which has increased the number of patients suffering from respiratory issues by nearly 10 to 15 per cent. *—Agencies*

FARMERS' PROTEST ON

Members of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugraha) block a road near the residence of former MP and BJP leader Preneet Kaur during a protest against the 'tardy' procurement of paddy in Patiala, Punjab, on Monday PHOTO: PTI

427 kg suspected drug seized in Gujarat factory, 4 arrested

BHARUCH/SURAT, 21 OCT

More than 2 kilograms of mephedrone worth Rs 2.14 crore and another 427kg of a suspected drug were seized from a factory and four persons were arrested in parallel operations in Gujarat's Bharuch and Surat districts, officials said on Monday.

More than 2kg of MD was seized from a four-wheeler near Velanja village in Surat on Sunday evening, resulting in the arrest of three people, Surat police commissioner Anupam Singh Gehlot said.

Another team carried out an operation at Avasar Enterprise, a unit located in Ankleshwar GIDC, on Sunday night and seized a 427kg consignment of a suspected drug, leading to the arrest of one person. The haul has been sent to a Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) for confirmation, a Surat Crime Branch release said.

Four people were arrested and contraband worth more than Rs 2 crore was seized in the twin operations of Surat and Bharuch police and two FIRs have been registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, it added.

"On Sunday, Surat crime branch received intel that Vishal Patel was manufacturing MD drug at a factory named Avsar Enterprise located in Ankleshwar industrial area. Three people connected to him were going to pass by a hotel in Velanja in a vehicle at around 6 pm with drug manufactured at the factory," the release said. Crime branch formed two different for Ankleshwar and Surat. *—PTI*

More than 2kg of MD was seized from a four-wheeler near Velanja village in Surat on Sunday evening PHOTO: PTI

Ujjain to have permanent ashrams like Haridwar: CM

UJJAIN, 21 OCT

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday said saints, seers and other religious leaders will be permitted to construct permanent ashrams in Ujjain on the lines of Haridwar.

He spoke at a press conference about preparations for the Simhastha Mela, slated to be held in the holy city in 2028.

"Ujjain is known for saints. Simhanstha Mela, held once in 12 years, will be organised in 2028. Sadhus and saints need a proper space for lodging and other activities in the city. Considering this, the state government has plans to build permanent ashrams by giving top priority to saints," Yadav said.

He said like the facilities for saints and seers in Haridwar, permanent ashrams will be built in Ujjain, and the Ujjain Development Authority will implement the plan.

Saints, seers, heads of Akharas and other religious leaders can invite everyone and work towards building their ashram, he said.

The chief minister said in view of the Simhastha mela, work will also be undertaken on basic facilities like roads, electricity, drinking water, etc. Priority will also be given to set up Dharamshalas and ayurveda centres, among other establishments, through interested devotees, he said. He further informed that the tender process for the Ujjain-Indore six-lane highway is over, and the foundation stone for the Ujjain-Jaora Green Field Four Lane Road will be laid soon. *—PTI*

AFTER 3 STUDENTS' DEATHS

SC pushes for safety norms in coaching centres

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

The Supreme Court on Monday stressed on having "uniform standards" to the extent possible to ensure safety and security of students studying at coaching centres.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing a matter related to the deaths of three civil service aspirants at a coaching centre in the national capital in July due to the flooding in the building's basement.

On 27 July, the three students drowned in the basement library of Rau's IAS Study Circle in Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar area after it was flooded following heavy rains.

The top court was informed by senior advocate Siddharth Dave, who is assisting the top court as an amicus curiae, about the broad areas that required attention.

Dave referred to the aspects of fire safety, fee regulation, student to classroom area ratio, student to teacher ratio, installation of CCTVs, medical facilities, mental health care and counselling for those studying at coaching centres.

The apex court pointed out the need to have uniform standards on the issue.

The respondent authorities were asked to offer suggestions to the amicus on the desirability of a comprehensive policy for coaching institutes, initially with respect to the National Capital Region (NCR).

The matter will be heard after two weeks. *—PTI*

SC grants 2 weeks more for NEET-UG report

The Supreme Court on Monday extended by two weeks the time granted to the Centre-appointed seven-member expert panel to file its report on exam reforms after reviewing the NTA's functioning in holding the NEET-UG. The exam is conducted for admission in undergraduate medical programs. Meanwhile, the The top court had also refused to annul the NEET-UG of 2024, saying there was no sufficient material on record at present to indicate a systemic leak or malpractice compromising the integrity of the examination. *—PTI*

FEMALE COP RAPED IN KANPUR, ACCUSED ARRESTED

KANPUR, 21 OCT

A female police constable on her way home to celebrate Karva Chauth was alleged raped here by her neighbour after being offered a lift, officials said on Monday.

The accused was an acquaintance of the woman and has been arrested, they said.

The incident took place on Saturday when the accused took the cop to an isolated area after giving her a lift on his motorcycle in the Sen-Paschim Para area, they said.

"Instead of dropping her at her destination, Paswan allegedly took the woman to an isolated field and raped her," Chander added.

Ghatampur Assistant Commissioner of Police Ranjeet Kumar said the woman raised an alarm when Paswan attempted to disrobe her, but there was no one around to help. "The victim bit a part of the accused's finger after the assault and somehow managed to flee," he said.

The woman then approached a nearby police outpost and narrated the incident, leading to the prompt registration of an FIR. *—PTI*

SC junks PIL to replace term 'Hindutva'

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a PIL seeking to replace the term 'Hindutva' with 'Bharatiya Samidhaanitva' (Indian constitutionalism). The PIL was filed by S N Kundra, a resident of Vikaspuri in Delhi.

"No sir, we will not entertain this," the CJI said.

SC stays NCPCR's order on madrassas

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed the operation of the communications issued by child rights body NCPCR urging states to shift students of unrecognised madrassas to government schools. The court ordered the communications of the NCPCR should not be acted upon.

Odisha on alert over cyclone warning

BHUBANESWAR, 21 OCT

The low pressure area over the Bay of Bengal on Monday intensified and is likely to turn into a cyclonic storm by 23 October which will cross between Puri in Odisha and Sagar island in West Bengal, the IMD said.

The India Meteorological Department in its latest message said: "...continuing its move the system is very likely to cross north Odisha and West Bengal coasts between Puri and Sagar Island during the night of 24 October and early morning 25 October as a severe cyclonic storm with a wind speed of 100-110 kmph with gusting 120 kmph."

IMD said the low-pressure area over the Bay of Bengal and adjoining Andaman Sea moved west-nortwestwards and lay as a well-marked low-pressure area over east-central Bay of Bengal at 11.30 hours on Monday.

"It is very likely to move west-northwestwards and intensify into a depression by 22 October morning and into a cyclonic storm by October 23, over eastcentral Bay of Bengal. Thereafter, it is very likely to move northwestwards and reach northwest Bay of Bengal off Odisha-West Bengal coasts by 24 October morning," the IMD said. IMD DG Mrutyunjay Mohapatra on Sunday said that Odisha is likely to bear the maximum brunt of the cyclonic storm. The cyclone would spend maximum time on the Odisha coast leading to heavy to very heavy rainfall and high speed wind up to 100 km/hour. *—PTI*

The cyclone would spend maximum time on the Odisha coast, leading to heavy rainfall and high speed wind up to 100 km/hour PHOTO: PTI

SHIMLA ROW

Mosque demolition begins after Waqf's nod

SHIMLA, 21 OCT

The demolition of three unauthorised storeys of the disputed Sanjauli mosque in Shimla started on Monday after permission was granted by the Waqf Board, the president of the mosque's managing committee Muhammad Latif said.

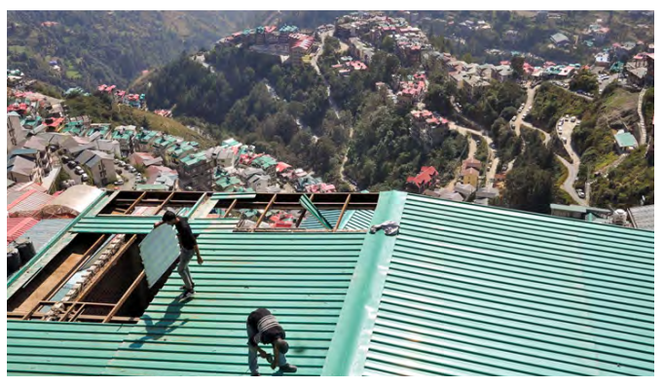
The demolition started with the removal of the roof amid tight police security, Latif told the PTI on Monday evening.

"The Waqf Board has granted the permission and allowed us to go ahead following which labourers were called and work to open the roof started today," he added.

After receiving the October 5 order of the Municipal Commissioner (MC) Court directing the Waqf Board and president of Sanjauli Mosque Committee to demolish three storeys of the five-storey disputed structure, the same was communicated to the Waqf Board which gave the go-ahead, Latif told reporters here on Monday. According to the MC Court order, the Waqf Board and the president of the mosque committee have to demolish the unauthorised portion of the mosque in two months at their own cost.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said that this is perhaps the first such example in the state where the people of the Muslim community have come forward to demolish the unauthorised mosque to maintain peace themselves.

He said people of all religions live here with respect and have the right to work in Himachal Pradesh. *—PTI*



Demolition of the illegal portion of the Sanjauli mosque is underway, in Shimla, on Monday PHOTO: PTI

DONALD AT MCDONALD'S

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump serves french fries at a McDonald's outlet in Pennsylvania during his campaigning ahead of the US Presidential elections. The campaign was intended as a jibe at Democratic leader Kamala Harris, who has often talked about working at the fast-food chain in her youth. ***PHOTO: X/@TRUMPWARROOM***

Israel's wars are costly; may require tough funding choices

On top of the grievous toll in human life and misery, Israel's war against the Hamas and Hezbollah militant groups has been expensive, and the painfully high financial costs are raising concerns about the long-term effect of the fighting on the country's economy.

Military spending has ballooned, and growth has stalled, especially in dangerous border areas that were evacuated. Economists say the country could face declining investment and higher taxes as the war strains government budgets and forces tough choices between social programmes and the military.

Here is a look at the monetary costs Israel faces as a result of the conflict:

Spending on the military has soared

The Israeli government is spending much more per month on the military, from USD 1.8 billion before Hamas started the fighting by attacking Israel on October 7, 2023, to around USD 4.7 billion by the end of last year, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

The government spent USD 27.5 billion on the military last year, according to the institute, ranking 15th globally behind Poland but ahead of Canada and Spain, all of which have larger populations. Military spending as a percentage of annual economic output was 5.3 per cent, compared with 3.4 per cent for the United States and 1.5 per cent for Germany. That pales in comparison to Ukraine, which spent 37 per cent of its GDP and more than half its entire government budget on fighting off Russia's invasion.

The war hurt growth and the labour supply

In the three months after Hamas attacked, Israel's economic output shrank 5.6 per cent, the worst performance of any of the 38 countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, a group of mostly rich nations.

The economy partly rebounded with growth of 4 per cent in the first part of this year but grew only 0.2 per cent in the second quarter.

Rescue workers use a bulldozer to remove rubble of destroyed buildings in Beirut's southern suburb, Lebanon on Monday ***PHOTO: PTI***

The war has inflicted an even heavier toll on Gaza's already broken economy, where 90 per cent of the population has been displaced and the vast majority of the workforce is unemployed. The West Bank economy has also been hit hard, where tens of thousands of Palestinian labourers lost their jobs in Israel after October 7 and Israeli military raids and checkpoints have hindered movement. The World Bank says the West Bank economy contracted by 25 per cent in the first quarter.

In Israel, the war has imposed many economic burdens. Call-ups and extensions of military service threaten to crimp the labour supply. Security worries deter investment in new business, and disruptions in flights have kept many visitors away, cutting into the tourism industry.

Meanwhile, the government is paying for housing for thousands of people who had to leave their homes in the south near the border with Gaza and in the north where they were exposed to fire from Hezbollah.

One of the biggest concerns is the open-ended nature of the fighting, which has lasted more than a year. Israel's economy rebounded quickly from a 2006 war with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. But that conflict lasted only 34 days.

Moody's Ratings cited that idea on September 27, when it lowered the Israeli government's credit rating, two notches. The Baa1 rating is still considered investment grade, albeit with moderate risk, according to Moody's.

The Israeli economy is still strong, with modest debt

Israel's economy is hardly collapsing. The country has a diversified, highly developed economy with a strong information-technology sector, which supports tax revenues and defence spending. Unemployment is low, and the TA-35 stock index is up 10.5 per cent on the year.

Even amid the fighting, tech companies raised some USD 2.5 billion in capital during the third quarter, according to Zvi Eckstein, head of the Aaron Institute for Economic Policy at Reichman University.

Israel started the war "in the best economic condition" regarding government debt, which stood at a relatively modest 60 per cent of GDP, Eckstein said. "We financed the war mainly with debt," which has now risen to 62 per cent but is still contained compared with France at 111 per cent and in line with Germany at 63.5 per cent.

The institute foresees debt reaching 80 per cent of GDP, assuming the fighting does not markedly intensify and some sort of cease-fire or conclusion can be reached by the end of next year. Even then, higher defence spending is likely, especially if Israel maintains a military presence in Gaza after the war.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich's budget for 2025 foresees a deficit of below 4 per cent, saying that will ensure that Israel's debt burden remains stable. Smotrich said the country has a stable shekel currency, rising share prices, a tight jobs market, strong tax revenues and access to credit, and a rebounding tech sector.

Moody's questioned the deficit figures, forecasting a 6 per cent deficit for next year.

The US stepped up military aid and could provide financial backing

Before the war, American military aid to Israel amounted to around USD 3.8 billion per year under a deal signed during President Barack Obama's administration. That comes to roughly 14 per cent of Israel's prewar military spending, much of which goes to US defence companies.

Since the war in Gaza began and led to escalating conflict across the Middle East, the United States has spent a record of at least USD 17.9 billion on military aid to Israel, according to a report for Brown University's Costs of War project that was released on the anniversary of the Hamas attacks on Israel.

Beyond strictly military aid, the US has offered critical financial support for Israel during times of trouble. Congress in 2003 approved USD 9 billion in credit guarantees that let Israel borrow at affordable rates after the economy suffered during the so-called second intifada, or Palestinian uprising. *—PTI*

SALAR

Humanising AI could lead us to dehumanise ourselves

Irish writer John Connolly once said: "The nature of humanity, its essence, is to feel another's pain as one's own, and to act to take that pain away."

For most of our history, we believed empathy was a uniquely human trait – a special ability that set us apart from machines and other animals. But this belief is now being challenged.

As AI becomes a bigger part of our lives, entering even our most intimate spheres, we're faced with a philosophical conundrum: could attributing human qualities to AI diminish our own human essence? Our research suggests it can.

Digitising companionship

In recent years, AI "companion" apps such as Replika have attracted millions of users. Replika allows users to create custom digital partners to engage in intimate conversations. Members who pay for Replika Pro can even turn their AI into a "romantic partner".

Physical AI companions aren't far behind. Companies such as JoyLoveDolls are selling interactive sex robots with customisable features including breast size, ethnicity, movement and AI responses such as moaning and flirting.

While this is currently a niche market, history suggests today's digital trends will become tomorrow's global norms. With about one in four adults experiencing loneliness, the demand for AI companions will grow.

The dangers of humanising AI

Humans have long attributed human traits to non-human entities – a tendency known as anthropomorphism.

It's no surprise we're doing this with AI tools such as ChatGPT, which appear to "think" and "feel". But why is humanising AI a problem?

For one thing, it allows AI companies to exploit our tendency to form attachments with human-like entities. Replika is marketed as "the AI companion who cares".

However, to avoid legal issues, the company elsewhere points out Replika isn't sentient and merely learns through millions of user interactions.

Some AI companies overtly claim their AI assistants have empathy and can even anticipate human needs. Such claims are misleading and can take advantage of people seeking companionship. Users may become deeply emotionally invested if they believe their AI companion truly understands them.

This raises serious ethical concerns. A user will hesitate to delete (that is, to "abandon" or "kill") their AI companion once they've ascribed some kind of sentience to it. But what happens when said companion unexpectedly disappears, such as if the user can no longer afford it, or if the company that runs it shuts down? While the companion may not be real, the feelings attached to it are.

Empathy – more than a programmable output

By reducing empathy to a programmable output, do we risk diminishing its true essence? To answer this, let's first think about what empathy really is.

Empathy involves responding to other people with understanding and concern. It's when you share your friend's sorrow as they tell you about their heartache, or when you feel joy radiating from someone you care about. It's a profound experience – rich and beyond simple forms of measurement.

A fundamental difference between humans and AI is that humans genuinely feel emotions, while AI can only simulate them. This touches on the hard problem of consciousness, which questions how subjective human experiences arise from physical processes in the brain.

While AI can simulate understanding, any "empathy" it purports to have is a result of programming that mimics empathetic language patterns. Unfortunately, AI providers have a financial incentive to trick users into growing attached to their seemingly empathetic products.

The dehumanAIsation hypothesis

Our "dehumanAIsation hypothesis" highlights the ethical concerns that come with trying to reduce humans to some basic functions that can be replicated by a machine. The more we humanise AI, the more we risk dehumanising ourselves.

For instance, depending on AI for emotional labour could make us less tolerant of the imperfections of real relationships. This could weaken our social bonds and even lead to emotional deskilling. Future generations may become less empathetic – losing their grasp on essential human qualities as emotional skills continue to be commodified and automated. Also, as AI companions become more common, people may use them to replace real human relationships.

This would likely increase loneliness and alienation – the very issues these systems claim to help with. Data privacy policies should also be clear, fair and without hidden terms that allow companies to exploit user-generated content. We must preserve the unique qualities that define the human experience. While AI can enhance certain aspects of life, it can't – and shouldn't – replace genuine human connection.

—The Conversation

In recent years, many AI "companion" apps allow users to create custom digital partners to engage in intimate conversations. Members who pay for it can even turn their AI into a "romantic partner" ***PHOTO: X***

LETTERS Write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Immigrants help power US economy. Will poll value or imperil them?

Few things say America like Janille and Tom Baker's ranch, with its grazing cattle, scrub brush-dotted desert and snow-capped mountains.

If only they could get American citizens to work on it.

The ranch in remote eastern Nevada produces around 10,000 tons of hay annually, and combines cowboy culture with a dash of Manifest Destiny. Rabbits, gophers and the occasional badger always outnumber humans and the nighttime sky is dark enough to count the stars.

But the Bakers' business couldn't survive without an agricultural guest worker program that brings in Mexican immigrants for about nine months a year to help harvest crops in fields where temperatures frequently exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 Celsius). "When people complain that foreign workers are taking their jobs, I roll my eyes," said Janille Baker, who manages the ranch's accounting. "In any industry, everybody's trying to find help. So this anti-immigration stance doesn't really make sense to me. If everyone needs workers, how are you planning to fill those jobs?" The ranch follows federal rules that require advertising available positions and making them available first to US citizens. But in the last six years, only two Americans called to inquire about jobs. A third trekked out in person, but left after seeing what the work entailed.

Immigration has become a source of fright and frustration for voters in this presidential election — with possible outcomes that could take the United States down two dramatically different paths.

Nowhere are the stakes higher than in Nevada, where 19 per cent of residents are foreign-born and around 9 per cent of the total workforce doesn't have US legal status.

Voters say it is among their most important issues in November. How they come down on immigration, choosing former President Donald Trump's hard-line proposals for mass deportations or Vice President Kamala Harris ' calls for a path to citizenship for millions of people in the country illegally who have been here for years, will go a long way toward determining the outcome.

Nearly 300 miles or 480 kilometres south of Baker Ranch, neon-saturated Las Vegas had almost 41 million tourists visit last year, and is seeing the issue of immigration play out differently, but with distinct parallels.

Immigration has become a source of fright, frustration for voters in this presidential poll ***PHOTO: ANADOLU AGENCY***

Absolutes sweep away nuance

If Trump deported all 11 million immigrants without legal status in the US, as he has suggested, the collateral risk could extend to the entire economy. Nevada's job losses alone might nearly equal what it suffered during the 2008 financial crisis. More than 10 per cent of Nevada's population lives in homes with at least one immigrant in the country illegally, according to estimates from the advocacy group Fwd.us.

"In our wonderful, 24-hour economy, we know that these hotels and casinos could not, should not, would not be able to open every day without immigrants," said Peter Guzman, president and CEO of the Latin Chamber of Commerce in Nevada.

Trump could also revive pushes he made during his first term to cancel programmes that have extended temporary legal status to Zetino and hundreds of thousands of others.

Harris has called for humane treatment at the border, particularly for children and families, and for letting longtime immigrants get citizenship. But she's also promised to revive a bipartisan package that Trump forced congressional Republicans to squash, which sought to provide USD 20 billion for immigration enforcement and tightened rules for immigrants seeking US asylum.

No issue with people who want to come here legally

Trump has made border security an unofficial anthem of his campaign, constantly decrying an " invasion " of people flooding into the country illegally. At the same time, he's endorsed more temporary visas for qualified foreigners, saying at a recent town hall with Spanish-language Univision, "We want workers, and we want them to come in, but they have to come in legally, and they have to love our country."

But the former president also has lately stepped up his attacks on people with temporary protected status, including spreading falsehoods about Haitians legally living in Ohio abducting and eating pets, and threatening to deport them should he win in November.

Trump has further stoked tensions by suggesting that immigrants coming into the US illegally are doing so to expressly take jobs from Black and Hispanic Americans.

Still, some of Trump's top supporters in Nevada are more careful to make distinctions between immigrants here legally and not.

Other conservatives are more explicit about the economic damage tougher immigration policies might do, though. Guzman, of the Latin chamber, has organized forums examining how construction in Las Vegas has been slowed by not being able to find enough workers. He's pushed for expanding guest worker programmes, noting on a call with an advocacy group, "I'm a registered Republican, and we are not all the same on this issue."

Florisela Lopez Rivera has seen that nuance firsthand and worries about politics overwhelming decency. A dishwasher at Wynn Casino in Las Vegas, Lopez Rivera is originally from El Salvador and got temporary protected status after Hurricane Mitch's devastation in 1998. She recently gained permanent US residency after her wife became a citizen, which means she's unlikely to face deportation under any circumstances.

Lopez Rivera is a member of the Culinary Workers Union, which represents 60,000, majority-Hispanic workers in Las Vegas and Reno. A Harris supporter, Lopez Rivera canvasses for her union to advocate for the vice president, stressing Harris being the daughter of immigrants.

—The Conversation

Prez introduces UPI service to boost Maldivian economy

MALE, 21 OCT

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has taken "necessary steps" to introduce India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in the archipelago nation, slated to benefit the Maldivian economy substantially. Developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), UPI is an instant real-time payment system for facilitating inter-bank transactions through mobile phones. Muizzu on Sunday set up a consortium to introduce UPI in the country and appointed TradeNet Maldives Corporation Limited as its leading agency, according to a press release by the President's Office. The president also suggested the participation of the country's banks, telecom companies, state-owned companies and fintech companies in the consortium. *—PTI*

Indonesia's new Prez announces largest Cabinet

JAKARTA, 21 OCT

Newly inaugurated President Prabowo Subianto announced Indonesia's largest-ever Cabinet late Sunday, with 109 members representing his pledge for a strong government. He named his Cabinet of ministers, vice ministers and head of national agencies the "Red and White Cabinet", referring to the colours of Indonesia's flag. Subianto became the eighth president of Southeast Asia's largest economy on Sunday. The Cabinet of Subianto's predecessor, Joko Widodo, had 34 ministers and head of government agencies. Subianto has said earlier that he needs a strong administration, even though analysts said that his "fat" Cabinet would bloat the bureaucracy. "I want to create a strong government that would unite our multicultural society and diverse political interests," Subianto said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Self-exiled Turkish leader Fethullah Gulen dies at 83

SAYLORBURG, 21 OCT

Fethullah Gulen, a reclusive US-based Islamic cleric who inspired a global social movement while facing accusations he masterminded a failed 2016 coup in his native Turkiye, has died. Abdullah Bozkurt, the former editor of the Gulen-linked Today's Zaman newspaper, who is now in exile in Sweden, said he spoke to Gulen's nephew, Kemal Gulen, who confirmed the death. Fethullah Gulen was in his eighties and had long been in ill health. The state-run Anadolu Agency quoted Turkish Foreign Ministry Hakan Fidan as saying the death has been confirmed by Turkish intelligence sources. Gulen spent the last decades of his life in self-exile, living on a gated compound in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains from where he continued to wield influence among his millions of followers in Turkiye and throughout the world. *—PTI*

Pak man kills mom, 3 others over 'liberal' lifestyle

KARACHI, 21 OCT

A Pakistani man slaughtered four female members of his family, including his mother and sister, for their "liberal" lifestyle and using social media, police said here on Monday. Bilal Ahmed was arrested on Saturday and produced before a court on Monday which remanded him to police custody. During the hearing, Ahmed told the court that he slit the throats of his mother, sister, niece, and sister-in-law because their "liberal" lifestyle had damaged his marriage and also they used to always nag him. "It is an open and shut case of Bilal being mentally unstable and ultra-conservative," investigating police officer Shaukat Awan said. The bodies of the four women were found in their apartment in Karachi's old Soldier Bazar area on Saturday with their throats slit. *—PTI*

Iran warns UN about Israel's nuke threats

WHO to evacuate 1,000 Palestinian women & children

Flames and smoke rise form Israeli airstrikes on Dahiyeh, in the southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon *PHOTO: PTI*

DEIR AL-BALAH, 20 OCT

Iran has warned the UN nuclear watchdog about Israel's threats against its nuclear sites, foreign ministry, spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei said on Monday at a weekly news conference.

Israel has vowed to attack Iran in retaliation for a volley of Iranian missiles launched on 1 October, leading to widespread speculation that Iran's nuclear sites could be among Israel's targets.

"Threats to attack nuclear sites are against UN resolutions .... And are condemned ... we have sent a letter about it to ... the UN nuclear watchdog," Baghaei said. Will target Hezbollah's financial arm: Israel

Israel's military announced Sunday it will now take aim at the Lebanon-based Hezbollah's financial arm and plans to attack a "large number of targets" in the coming hours in Beirut and elsewhere.

Israeli military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said they will issue evacuation warnings for people in parts of Beirut, and "anyone who will be near the sites used to finance Hezbollah's terrorist activity is required to stay away from them immediately."

The strikes will target al-Qard al-Hassan "all over Lebanon," a senior Israeli intelligence official said. Al-Qard al-Hassan is a unit in Hezbollah that's used to pay operatives of the Iran-backed militant group and help buy arms, the official added, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with army regulations.

A year of escalating tensions between Israel and Hezbollah over the war in Gaza turned into all-out war last month, and Israel sent ground troops into Lebanon early this month. The Lebanese army said three soldiers were killed in an Israeli strike on Sunday on their vehicle in southern Lebanon. There was no immediate comment on that from the Israeli military, which said it struck more than 100 Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon in the past day and continued ground operations there. Lebanon's army has largely kept to the sidelines in the war. The military is a respected institution in Lebanon, but isn't powerful enough to impose its will on Hezbollah or defend the country from an Israeli invasion.

The wounded and sick Palestinians will soon be taken from Gaza to Europe to receive emergency medical treatment. Israel, which is besieging the war-devastated Palestinian territory, "is committed to 1,000 more medical evacuations within the next months to the European Union", World Health Organization Europe official Hans Kluge said. "This would never have happened if we did not keep the dialogue [open] ... The most important medicine is peace," Kluge added. *—PTI/ The Guardian*

Lloyd Austin *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

US DEFENCE CHIEF AUSTIN VISITS KYIV FOR TALKS

KYIV, 21 OCT

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived in Kyiv on an unannounced visit Monday, hours after a Russian drone attack on the Ukrainian capital and as Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pushes Western partners to keep providing military support for the war.

Austin said on the X platform that his fourth visit shows "that the United States, alongside the international community, continues to stand by Ukraine". Ukraine is having difficulty holding back a ferocious Russian campaign along the eastern front that is gradually compelling Kyiv's forces to give up a series of towns, villages and hamlets.

Zelenskyy is urging Western allies to support his so-called victory plan' to end the almost three-year war, which is Europe's biggest conflict since World War II and has cost tens of thousands of lives on both sides, including many civilians.

The Western response has been lukewarm, and Austin was expected to discuss the plan with Ukrainian officials in Kyiv. Zelenskyy said that his plan had won the backing of France, Lithuania, Nordic countries and "many other allies" in the European Union which he didn't name.

According to Ukraine's Foreign Ministry, the meeting focused on strengthening strategic relations, defence cooperation and addressing global food security through Black Sea grain shipments from Ukraine that pass through Turkey's Bosphorus Strait. *—PTI*

WARNING GIVEN

S Korea protests posting of N Korean troops in Russia

SEOUL, 21 OCT

South Korea on Monday demanded the immediate pullout of North Korean troops allegedly deployed in Russia as it summoned the Russian Ambassador to protest deepening military cooperation between Pyongyang and Moscow.

South Korea's spy agency said Friday it had confirmed that North Korea sent 1,500 special operation forces to Russia earlier this month to support Moscow's war against Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy earlier said his government had intelligence that 10,000 North Korea soldiers were being prepared to join invading Russian forces.

During a meeting with Russian Ambassador Georgy Zinoviev, Vice South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Hong Kyun "condemned in the strongest terms" North Korea's troop dispatch that he said poses "a grave security threat" to South Korea and the international community, the South Korean Foreign Ministry said.

North Korea's advancing nuclear arsenal is a major security threat to South Korea. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un recently took steps to permanently terminate all relations with South Korea and threatened to use nuclear weapons pre-emptively. Some observers say South Korea will likely consider supplying weapons to Ukraine if Russian transfers of high-tech nuclear and missile technologies to North Korea are verified. *—PTI*

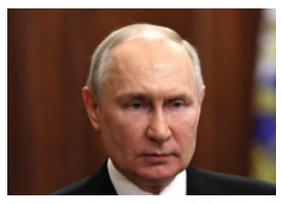
Can't keep Russia off global stage: Putin at summit

WASHINGTON, 21 OCT

In the coming days, Russian President Vladimir Putin will be shaking hands with multiple world leaders, including China's Xi Jinping, India's Narendra Modi, Turkiye's Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iran's Masoud Pezeshkian.

They will all be in the Russian city of Kazan on Tuesday for a meeting of the BRICS bloc of developing economies, defying predictions that the war in Ukraine and an international arrest warrant against Putin would turn him into a pariah.

The alliance, which aims to counterbalance the Western-led world order, initially included Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, but started to



Vladimir Putin *PHOTO: X*

rapidly expand this year. Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia joined in January; Turkiye, Azerbaijan and Malaysia formally applied, and a number of others expressed a desire to be members.

Putin's foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov said 32 countries confirmed participation, and more than 20 will send heads of state. Putin will hold around 20 bilateral meetings, Ushakov said. *—PTI*

Pakistan limits Chief Justice's term to three years

ISLAMABAD, 21 OCT

- The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Sunni-Ittehad Council opposed the amendment, but six independent members who held their seats with the support of the PTI supported the bill

Following an overnight debate, Pakistan's National Assembly passed the controversial judicial amendment bill early on Monday, capping the chief justice's tenure to three years.

The National Assembly passed the 26th Constitution Amendment Bill, which the opposition alleges is aimed at watering down the powers of the independent judiciary, at 5 am with 225 members in the 336-member house supporting the bill.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Sunni-Ittehad Council (SIC) opposed the amendment, but six independent members who held their seats with the support of the PTI supported the bill. The government needed 224 votes to pass the amendment.

The Senate on Sunday night voted 65-4 to approve the amendment with the required two-thirds majority. The ruling coalition needed the support of 64 members in the upper house of the parliament.

Following its passage in both Houses of Parliament, the Constitution (26th Amendment) Act, 2024 will now be sent to the president for assent under Article 75 of Pakistan's Constitution and become law after his signatures.

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar who presented the bill in the Senate said the 'new-face' commission would consist of the Chief Justice, four senior-most Supreme Court judges, two senators and two national assembly members - one of each from the opposition.

The amendment blocked the automatic rise of the senior-most Supreme Court judge to the post of chief justice after the incumbent CJP retired. *—PTI*

Taiwan: US and Canadian warships sail through Strait

TAIPEI, 21 OCT

US and Canadian warships sailed through the Taiwan Strait on Sunday, almost a week after China held massive war games around Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own territory.

The destroyer USS Higgins and the Canadian frigate HMCS Vancouver made a "routine" transit of the Taiwan Strait meant to uphold the principle of freedom of navigation for all countries, read a statement on Monday by the US Navy's 7th Fleet.

The US Navy, occasionally joined by ships from allied countries, regularly transits the sensitive waterway separating China from Taiwan.

China condemned the maneuver, saying it undermined peace and stability in the region. The People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theatre Command said it mobilised naval and air forces to monitor the transit of the US and Canadian ships "in accordance with the law".

The transiting ships navigated "through waters where high-seas freedom of navigation and overflight apply in accordance with international law", read the US Navy 7th Fleet statement. "The international community's navigational rights and freedoms in the Taiwan Strait should not be limited," it added. *—PTI*

About 30 people have been rescued from the boat, which on Sunday was carrying an estimated 70-75 people to the nearby coastal town of Myeik in Myanmar's southern region *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

8 dead, dozens missing after boat capsizes in Myanmar

BANGKOK, 21 OCT

Eight people are confirmed dead and more than 30 are missing after a boat whose passengers included villagers fleeing from fighting in Myanmar capsized in the Andaman Sea, a rescue worker and local media said Monday.

About 30 people have been rescued from the boat, which on Sunday was carrying an estimated 70-75 people to the nearby coastal town of Myeik in Myanmar's southern region of Tanintharyi from the island of Kyauk Kar, which is in an estuary leading to the sea, according to a villager helping rescue operations.

The crowded passenger boat set out from Kyauk Kar at 9.30 pm on Sunday and sank near the mouth of the estuary about 15 minutes later, said the villager, speaking to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because he feared being arrested by the military

The cause of the accident was unclear, but the villager said the boat, which normally carries a maximum of 30-40 passengers, was overcrowded with people and commodities, and there were strong currents in the sea. It is located near other villages where fighting is taking place between the Myanmar army and pro-democracy guerrillas. Most of the passengers on the boat came from where the fighting had been going on for about a week, the villager said.

Myanmar is wracked by violence that began after the army ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. Opponents of military rule launched an armed resistance movement, and large parts of the country are now embroiled. *—PTI*

'GIVE US WHAT YOU STOLE'

Australian senator yells at King Charles

CANBERRA, 21 OCT

An Indigenous senator told King Charles III that Australia is not his land and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the monarch is not needed as the country's head of state as the British royal visited Australia's parliament on Monday.

Indigenous independent Senator Lidia Thorpe was escorted out of a parliamentary reception for the royal couple after shouting that British colonisers have taken Indigenous land and bones.

King Charles spoke quietly with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese while security officials stopped Senator Thorpe from approaching. "This is not your land. You are not my king," Thorpe yelled as she was ushered from the hall.

Indigenous independent Senator Lidia Thorpe was escorted out of a parliamentary reception *PHOTO: X@THETORONTOSUN*

Albanese, who wants the country to become a republic with an Australian head of state, also told the king it was time for his role to end. "You have shown great respect for Australians, even during times when we have debated the future of our own constitutional arrangements and the nature of our relationship with the Crown," Albanese said. But, he said, "nothing stands still".

Opposition leader Peter Dutton, who wants to keep the British king as Australia's monarch, noted that even supporters of a republic were honoured to attend a reception for the Charles and Queen Camilla at Parliament House in the capital Canberra.

"People have had haircuts, people have shined shoes, suits have been pressed and that's just the republicans," Dutton quipped. Australia's six state government leaders underscored the political divide on the country's constitutional relationship with Britain by declining invitations to attend the reception. *—PTI*

Tropical storm Oscar brings winds, rains to Cuba

HAVANA, 21 OCT

Tropical Storm Oscar brought heavy rains and winds to Cuba, an island already beleaguered by a massive power outage, late Sunday after brushing the Bahamas.

It made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 75 mph (120 kph) in the eastern Cuban province of Guantanamo, near the city of Baracoa, on Sunday evening.

Oscar had weakened to a tropical storm with 110 kilometres winds by late Sunday, the US National Hurricane Centre said. The storm was 65 kilometres east of Guantanamo moving west-northwest at 10 kilometres.

Thunderstorms and rain, along with moderate flooding in low-lying areas, were reported in the country's east-

PHOTO: X

ern provinces. Cuban media said 2-metre (6.5-feet) swells were hitting the coast and roofs and walls in Baracoa had been damaged. Authorities have set up 20 centres for evacuees.

A storm surge of up to 3 feet in some areas of Cuba's north shore in the area was possible, the centre said. Oscar was expected to weaken over eastern Cuba before making a turn to the northeast and approaching the central Bahamas on Tuesday, the centre said. *—PTI*

Karan's Dharma sells 50% stake to Adar for ₹1,000 cr

Adar Poonawalla's Serene investment value now at ₹2,000 cr

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Vaccine maker Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla-led Serene Productions on Monday said it will pick 50 per cent stake in Karan Johar's Dharma Productions and Dharmatic Entertainment for Rs 1,000 crore.

Serene Productions has entered into a binding agreement to invest Rs 1,000 crore in production house Dharma Productions and Dharmatic Entertainment (Dharma), the company said in a statement.

Subsequently, Serene Productions will hold a 50 per cent stake in Dharma, with Johar retaining the remaining 50 per cent ownership, it added.

"Poonawalla's investment values Dharma at Rs 2,000 crore," the statement said.

This alliance signifies a transformative step toward elevating the Indian entertainment industry on the global stage, in an era where the relationship between audiences and entertainment platforms is more dynamic and interactive than ever before, the company said.

Commenting on the investment, Poonawalla said, "We hope to build and grow Dharma and scale even greater heights in the years to come."

On the investment by Serene Productions, Johar said, "This partnership represents a perfect blend of our emotional storytelling prowess and forward-thinking business strategies. It's about honouring our roots while embracing the future of global entertainment."

The collaboration aims to further transform content creation, distribution, and audience engagement by integrating advanced technologies and pioneering production methods, it added.

The development comes at a time when India's entertainment industry has experienced significant expansion, driven by surging digital penetration and a diverse audience seeking high-quality content across multiple platforms, with growing global relevance, the company said.

Dharma Productions is one of India's leading film production and distribution companies, founded by late Yash Johar in 1976. *—PTI*

India's first coal exchange to be set up soon: Reddy

NEW DELHI , 21 OCT

Union minister G Kishan Reddy on Monday said that India's first coal exchange would be set up soon. A coal exchange is likely to facilitate more sellers and buyers to trade coal as a commodity. Talking to reporters on the sidelines of an event here, Reddy, who is coal and mines minister, said that coal exchange is likely to come up soon. The plan for setting up the coal exchange was discussed in a recent meeting, the minister said further. The draft note for the Cabinet for setting up of coal exchange in the country was circulated for inter-ministerial consultations. "Final note for the CCEA has been approved by the Honorable Minister of coal," it said. The minister further said that if required India will import coking coal from Russia. The Coal Exchange will work under supervision of Coal Controller. *—PTI*

Rupee ends flat at 84.07 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 21 OCT

The rupee on Monday settled flat at 84.07 (provisional) against the US dollar amid strong American currency against major rivals overseas and relentless foreign fund outflows. Investors remained cautious and stayed away from riskier assets due to geopolitical uncertainties, forex dealers said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 84.06 against the greenback and stayed almost flat throughout the session. The unit finally settled at 84.07 (provisional) against the dollar, unchanged from its previous session's closing level. On Friday, the rupee slipped 1 paisa to close at 84.07 against the US dollar, a tad higher from its all-time low of 84.09. Meanwhile, the dollar index, rose 0.19 per cent to 103.50. *—PTI*

'India's aviation sector has huge growth runway'

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

India's civil aviation sector has a huge growth runway and the company is excited about the opportunities in the country, GE Aerospace South Asia CEO Vikram Rai said on Monday. He was speaking at the NDTV World Summit 2024 'The India Century' in the national capital."I cannot be more excited about what India has to offer to the aviation sector," Rai said and added that there is a huge runway for growth of the civil aviation sector. Among others, the engine maker is supplying engines to Air India for its planes. The country is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets. Indian carriers are currently operating around 800 planes and there are more than 1,200 aircraft on order. *—PTI*

Alembic Pharma gets USFDA nod for hypertension meds

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Alembic Pharmaceuticals Ltd on Monday said it has received final approval from the US health regulator for its generic version of Diltiazem Hydrochloride extended-release capsules used to treat hypertension. The approval by the US Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) is for the abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) Diltiazem Hydrochloride extended-release capsules of strengths 120 mg, 180 mg, and 240 mg, the company said in a statement. These are therapeutically equivalent to the reference listed drug product (RLD), Dilacor XR Extended-Release Capsules, 120 mg, 180 mg, and 240 mg of Allergan Sales LLC, it added. Diltiazem Hydrochloride extended-release capsules are indicated for treatment of hypertension. Citing IQVIA data, Alembic Pharma said Diltiazem Hydrochloride extended-release capsules 120 mg, 180 mg, and 240 mg have an estimated market size of USD 28.2 million for 12 months ended June 2024. *—PTI*

SENSEX AT 81,151.27 PTS

Mkt closes lower on selling in Kotak Bank, FII

Shares of Kotak Mahindra Bank tanked nearly 7% **PHOTO: PTI**

MUMBAI, 21 OCT

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty gave up initial gains and ended lower on Monday tracking a sharp fall in Kotak Mahindra Bank and relentless foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share Sensex declined 73.48 points or 0.09 per cent to settle at 81,151.27.

The barometer shot 545 points at the opening but succumbed to selling pressure later and hit a low of 80,811.23.

The index gyrated 958.79 points between the day's high and the low level.

The NSE Nifty dipped 72.95 points or 0.29 per cent to 24,781.10.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Kotak Mahindra Bank tanked over 4 per cent after the company's quarterly earnings failed to cheer investors.

Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finance, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and JSW Steel were the other big laggards.

HDFC Bank climbed nearly 3 per cent after the firm on Saturday reported a 6 per cent increase in September quarter net profit to Rs 17,825.91 crore on a consolidated basis.

Asian Paints, Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Maruti and Tech Mahindra were also among the gainers.

Kotak Bank shares slump

Shares of Kotak Mahindra Bank on Monday tanked nearly 7 per cent after its September quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.

The stock tumbled 6.63 per cent to Rs 1,743 apiece on the BSE after a weak beginning to the trade.

On the NSE, it slumped 6.73 per cent to Rs 1,745.10 a share.

The company's market valuation eroded by Rs 24,801.79 crore to Rs 3,46,936.88 crore.

RBL Bank shares tank 14%

Shares of RBL Bank slumped 14 per cent on Monday morning after the firm posted a 24 per cent decline in net profit in the September quarter to Rs 223 crore. The company's stock plunged 14 per cent to hit a 52-week low of Rs 176.50 apiece on both the BSE and NSE.

Tech Mahindra shares up

Shares of IT services firm Tech Mahindra on Monday climbed over 4 per cent after the company reported a more than two-fold jump in consolidated net profit for the September quarter. The stock went up by 4.34 per cent to Rs 1,761.30 -- its 52-week high -- on the BSE. *—PTI*

Gold and silver prices hit new peak ahead of Diwali

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Gold prices surged by Rs 750 to hit a record high of Rs 80,650 per 10 grams while silver skyrocketed by Rs 5,000 per kg in the national capital on Monday, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Extending its gains for the fourth straight day, silver prices spurted by Rs 5,000 to hit a fresh record high of Rs 99,500 per kg from the previous close of Rs 94,500 per kg on Friday.

According to commodities market experts, the ongoing bullish sentiment in the silver market is primarily driven by industrial demand and gold's rally.

Silver's upward momentum appears strong. Investors are likely to continue to view dips as buying opportunities, keeping the white metal well-supported in the coming sessions, they said.

PHOTO: PTI

- According to commodities market experts, the ongoing bullish sentiment in the silver market is primarily driven by industrial demand and gold's rally

Additionally, gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed Rs 750 to hit a new record high of Rs 80,250 per 10 grams. The metal of 99.5 per cent purity had ended at Rs 79,500 per 10 grams while gold of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 79,900 per 10 grams on Friday.

During the day, the precious metal had surged Rs 591 or 0.76 per cent to Rs 78,340 per 10 grams on Monday.

Silver contracts for December delivery bounced Rs 2,822 or 2.96 per cent to hit a high of Rs 98,224 per kg.

Meanwhile, silver futures spiked 2.91 per cent to hit a 12-year high of USD 34.20 per ounce in the Asian market hours.

The surge in silver prices reflects both increasing demand for industrial use and its value as a safe-haven asset. With global outlook remaining uncertain, silver could see further gains. *—PTI/ANI*

TATA MOTORS GETS ORDER FOR 1K BUS CHASSIS

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Tata Motors on Monday said it has received an order from the UP State Road Transport Corporation to supply 1,000 units of diesel bus chassis.

The company received the order following a competitive e-bidding process, Tata Motors said in a statement.

The bus chassis will be supplied in a phased manner as per mutually agreed terms, it added.

"The Tata LPO 1618 bus chassis is engineered to deliver robust and reliable mobility with high uptime and low maintenance and operating costs. We look forward to commencing supplies as per the guidance of UPSRTC.

The latest order follows the successful fulfilment of a similar, larger order of 1,350 bus chassis received last year. *—PTI*

DOMICILE SHIFT

Groww reports loss of ₹805 cr; pays ₹1,340 cr tax

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Groww, a financial services platform, on Monday reported a net loss of Rs 805 crore for the financial year that ended on March 31, 2024 (FY24) primarily due to a one-time tax payment of Rs 1,340 crore for shifting its domicile to India.

Despite this, the Tiger Global-backed company maintained its operational profitability at Rs 535 crore for FY24 as compared to Rs 458 crore for FY23, marking an increase of 17 per cent .

"The company paid about Rs 1,340 crore as a one-time tax on its domicile movement to India earlier this year. After paying tax, the company reported a net loss of Rs 805 crore," Groww said in a statement. Bengaluru-based company began in 2016 as a mutual funds investing platform. *—PTI*

Mittal optimistic about AI, warns against misuse

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be among the most important drivers of the world economy and geopolitics in times to come, Bharti Group Chairman Sunil Mittal said on Monday but cautioned that the new technology will pose new challenges, including potential for misuse and hence require greater vigilance and guardrails.

Speaking at the NDTV World Summit, the telecom doyen who helms India's second-largest telco Bharti Airtel, cited a personal anecdote on how a senior finance official stationed in Dubai received a fraudulent call that seemed to mimic Mittal's voice and tone and directed a large fund transfer.

The official who was vigilant and "sensible" immediately detected the fraud. Mittal admitted that when he heard the voice recording himself he was "stunned" as "it was perfectly articulated as I would speak".

"And anyone who would not have been vigilant may have done something about it," he said and warned that in future misuse of technology will enable fraudsters to go a step ahead and use digital signatures, even faces on zoom calls to perpetrate such acts.

Sunil Mittal **PHOTO: PTI**

"We'll have to protect our societies from the evils of AI, and yet we have to use the goodness of AI, because those companies, and nations that will not adopt AI will be left behind. So this is a conundrum for every time you get a new technology into place, there are pluses and minuses. I remain very optimistic about the benefit of AI that the human race will achieve and be able to do jobs which are otherwise very difficult to perform," Mittal said.

Elaborating, he said AI is bringing changes in call center and workforce management. Mittal said he is hopeful there will be new ideas, new thoughts with advent of AI. *—PTI*

Indian chemical industry set for 15-20 growth amid China struggles

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Indian chemical industry is gearing up to capture a bigger share of the global market as China struggles with unused production capacity, which is likely to keep chemical prices steady, according to Axis Capital report.

With an expected 4 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in the global specialty chemicals sector, India's chemical industry is projected to expand at a faster pace of 15-20 per cent CAGR between CY22-30, driven by ongoing capacity expansion, R&D investments, and strategic market positioning.

Indian chemical companies have been expanding their production facilities in a well-planned manner, investing heavily in research and development (R&D), and securing contracts to make supply chains safer.

PHOTO: PTI

India's market share remains around 4 per cent, but is poised to grow substantially as global supply chains continue to diversify away from China.

Over the past decade, India's top 20 chemical companies, spanning both speciality and bulk segments, have significantly ramped up their capital expenditures (capex).

Indian chemical firms are making concerted efforts to strengthen their R&D teams, embracing new chemistries and expanding into diversified product offerings.

However, Indian companies could benefit from their niche offerings and backward-integrated operations, allowing them to capture market share from China and Europe through higher volumes, process innovations. *—ANI*

Expect Indian apparel exporters to post 9-11% revenue growth: ICRA

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Indian apparel exporters are expected to register a 9-11 per cent revenue expansion in FY25 aided primarily by gradual liquidation of retail inventory in key end markets and a shift in global sourcing to India, ratings agency ICRA on Monday.

The long-term prospects for Indian apparel exports are favourable, aided by enhanced product acceptance in end markets, evolving consumer trends and a boost from the government in the form of the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme, export incentives, the proposed free trade agreement with the UK and the EU, among others, ICRA said in a statement.

The expected growth this fiscal follows a tepid performance in FY24 when exports were affected because of high retail inventory, sluggish demand from the key end markets, supply chain issues, including the Red Sea crisis and heightened competition from neighbouring countries, it added.

With the revival in demand, ICRA said it expects the capex spending to increase in FY2025 and FY2026 and may stay in the range of 5-8 per cent of the turnover.

Nevertheless, he said challenges around demand uncertainty persist in a few key markets amid a subdued macroeconomic environment and geopolitical issues.

ICRA said the recent geo-political tensions in Bangladesh could result in capacity additions outside the country, including India.

ICRA anticipates the culmination of these schemes to enable Indian apparel exporters to increase their share of the pie in the global apparel trade, he added. *—PTI*

AIRLINES SCHEME

UDAN to be extended for 10 more yrs: Naidu

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

The government will extend the regional air connectivity scheme UDAN for 10 more years, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said on Monday.

UDAN has led to the birth and growth of regional airlines, generation of jobs and contribution to tourism, the minister said at a function in the national capital to mark eight years of the scheme.

As many as 601 routes and 71 airports have been operationalised under the regional air connectivity scheme.

PHOTO: PTI

UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) is aimed at enhancing regional air connectivity and making flying more affordable. It was introduced on 21 October, 2016 for 10 years.

The minister said the scheme will be extended for another 10 years.

Civil Aviation Secretary Vumlunmang Vualnam said the ministry is looking at the financial viability aspects and streamlining of the procedures under the scheme.

"A total of 86 aerodromes -- comprising 71 airports, 13 heliports, and 2 water aerodromes -- have been operationalised, facilitating the travel of over 1.44 crore passengers across more than 2.8 lakh flights," the ministry said in a release on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the number of operational airports in the country has doubled from 74 in 2014 to 157 in 2024 and the aim is to increase the count to 350-400 by 2047. *—PTI*

Zepto CEO says his startup expanding strongly in India

NEW DELHI, 21 OCT

Aadit Palicha, co-founder and CEO of quick commerce company Zepto on Monday said his company is expanding its business geographically across India. He also added that the unicorn startup has been able to raise the necessary capital for the expansion.

In the past 3 months, Zepto launched its businesses in cities such as Nashik, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Lucknow, and Coimbatore.

Zepto has a valuation of over USD 5 billion.

Founded in 2021 by Aadit Palicha, Zepto offers a quick commerce service, delivering online groceries, fruits, vegetables, electronics, and many more in a few minutes. Palicha, born in Mumbai, began his business career as an entrepreneur at the age of 17.

Zepto launched its first warehouse, also called the dark store, in Mumbai's Bandra.

Cut to today, Zepto now has about 50,000 delivery partners, and increasing with the company expanding its businesses in newer cities. *—PTI*

Fakhar to escape with a reprimand for criticising PCB

LAHORE, 21 OCT

Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman is likely to escape with a reprimand for criticising the PCB ahead of the squad announcement, where it planned to drop former skipper Babar Azam for two Tests against England. Azam, along with several senior players, got eventually dropped for two Test days after Fakhar expressed his displeasure on social media. Fakhar was issued a show-cause notice by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) after he tweeted his views where he compared Azam's run drought with India's Virat Kohli, who went through a lean patch between 2020 and late 2022. "It's concerning to hear suggestions about dropping Babar Azam. India didn't bench Virat Kohli during his rough stretch between 2020 and 2023, when he averaged 19.33, 28.21, and 26.50, respectively," Fakhar wrote on 'X'. *—PTI*

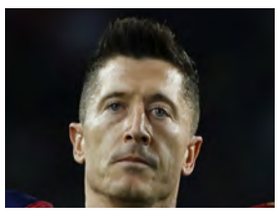


PHOTO: PTI

Lewandowski extends scoring streak in La Liga

MADRID, 21 OCT

Robert Lewandowski scored two more goals to extend his league-leading tally to 12 and Barcelona routed Sevilla 5-1 to open a three-point gap on Real Madrid ahead of next weekend's "clasico." Pedri and Pablo Torre also scored Sunday for the Catalan club, which restored its lead of La Liga a day after second-place Madrid won 2-1 at Celta Vigo. Barcelona midfielder Gavi came off the bench to replace Pedri in the 83rd minute, making his return to action nearly a year after a serious knee injury. "I had been dreaming about this moment for several months," Gavi said. "It's tough to watch from the outside. I have to enjoy every moment. I feel very lucky to be here today." *—PTI*

Inter beat Roma but lose 2 key players to injuries

MILAN, 21 OCT

Shortly after Inter Milan president Giuseppe Marotta lamented that the fixture list needed to be cut in order to safeguard the players, the Nerazzurri lost two key members of its team to injury. Hakan Çalhanoglu and Francesco Acerbi were both forced off with muscular issues in the first half of Inter's match at Roma. Inter went on to win 1-0, thanks to a 60th-minute strike by Lautaro Martínez, to move back to within two points of Serie A leader Napoli, which had earlier beaten Empoli 1-0. The match was the first of seven in 21 days in an intense period for Inter, which will also play more games than almost any other club this season. As well as the Italian league, Inter is involved in the Champions League, the Italian Cup and Italian Super Cup, and has qualified for the newly expanded Club World Cup. *—PTI*

Australia series still some time away: Mohammed Shami

GURUGRAM, 21 OCT

His fitness becoming a topic of swirling speculation, seasoned India pacer Mohammed Shami said on Monday that he is completely pain-free and is still not out of reckoning for the marquee Test tour of Australia starting next month. Shami bowled full tilt in the nets after India's opening Test against New Zealand in Bengaluru on Sunday. This was a few days after skipper Rohit Sharma revealed that he had swelling in his knees which has affected his rehabilitation from an ankle injury sustained last year. "I am very happy with how I bowled yesterday. I was bowling from half run-up before that because I didn't want to take too much load," he said. *—PTI*

Deepika Kumari during the competition in Tlaxcala, Mexico, on Monday PHOTO: X/@WORLDARCHERY

Deepika bags her 5th silver at Archery WC

Bommadevara makes an exit in opening round

TLAXCALA, 21 OCT

India's premier recurve archer Deepika Kumari won her fifth silver medal at the World Cup Final after losing the summit clash 0-6 to China's Li Jiaman, here.

Returning to the World Cup Final after three years following the birth of her daughter in December 2022, four-time Olympian Deepika was seeded third in the eight-archer field.

She had a smooth run through the semifinals but probably the pressure of gold medal match got to her against fourth-seed Li Jiaman, a team silver medalist from the Paris Olympics.

It was Deepika's ninth appearance at the World Cup Final where she has also bagged a bronze.

Dola Banerjee is the only Indian archer to have won a gold in the World Cup Final, having topped the podium in Dubai 2007.

In the men's recurve section, Dhiraj Bommadevara, despite leading 4-2, could not hold off the challenge from South Korea's Paris Olympics bronze medallist, Lee Woo Seok in the opening round and made an early exit.

The pressure once again seemed to affect the Indian archers, who have often struggled in high-stakes matches. After a stellar semifinal win against Mexico's Alejandra Valencia, Deepika couldn't maintain momentum.

She dropped the first set by a single point (26-27). Despite improving in the second set, Li's flawless 30, including an X-ring shot, gave the Chinese archer a commanding a 2-0 lead (30-28). The third set proved decisive as Deepika's second arrow landed in the red 7-ring, allowing Li to claim victory with three solid 9s, taking the set 27-25 and sealing the gold on her debut World Cup Final appearance.

Deepika's campaign had begun with a dominant 6-0 victory over China's Yang Xiaolei (27-23, 29-22, 29-27). In the men's recurve, third-seeded Dhiraj was India's sole qualifier. *—PTI*

F1: Norris flays 'rushed decision' on penalty

WASHINGTON, 21 OCT

Lando Norris and the McLaren team principal, Andrea Stella, have condemned the FIA stewards, claiming they incorrectly interfered in the US Grand Prix, costing Norris third place and vital points in his world championship battle with Red Bull's Max Verstappen, who took the place after Norris was given a penalty.

The two drivers had engaged in a gripping fight for the final ten laps of the race , which was won by Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. Norris and Verstappen had vied with one another with great skill when Norris went round the outside of turn 12 to pass but in so doing both drivers went off track. Norris was then given a five-second penalty by the stewards for making the overtake off track, and their positions in third and fourth were reversed after they had crossed the line.

Norris believed the stewards had been too hasty in their decision. "He went off the track because he over-defended and he made a mistake but he has gained from that. I had to go off to avoid him," he said.

- The two drivers had engaged in a gripping fight for the final ten laps of the race, which was won by Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. Norris and Verstappen had vied with one another with great skill when Norris went round the outside of turn 12 to pass

Stella was also damning in his assessment. "The way the stewards interfered with a beautiful piece of motorsport was inappropriate," he said. "Both cars went off track so both cars gained an advantage."

McLaren could have ordered Norris to give up the place to and have a chance to take it back but the team were convinced they did not need to do so. "We double checked that both cars went off track so for us there was no doubt the manoeuvre was correct," Stella said. *—PTI*

Lando Norris was then given a five-second penalty by the stewards for making the overtake off the track PHOTO: X/@MCLARENF1

PHOTO: X

RANJI TROPHY: MUMBAI CRUISE TO 9-WICKET WIN OVER M'RASHTRA

MUMBAI, 21 OCT

Defending champions Mumbai got their Ranji Trophy campaign back on track with an emphatic nine-wicket win over Maharashtra in their second group A league game here on Monday, offsetting the heavy loss to Baroda in the opening game.

Needing 74 to win, Mumbai went into the final day at 13 for no loss.

While Ayush Mhatre's (15) dismissal robbed them off a bonus point, Prithvi Shaw (39 not out off 36 balls) and Hardik Tamore (21 not out off 26 balls) earned six points for the team in just 13.3 overs.

This was after the 42-time champions lost to Baroda by 84 runs in the opening Ranji Trophy fixture but in the second match at the BKC ground, Mumbai excelled in all departments of the game.

The match was won and lost on the first day itself when Mumbai bowled out Maharashtra for 126 in their first innings and then rode on 17-year-old Mhatre's smashing 176 and Shreyas Iyer's belligerent 142 to score 441.

While Maharashtra fared much better in the second innings with centuries from Ruturaj Gaikwad and veteran Ankit Bawne, apart from a 98 from former India U-19 batter Sachin Dhas, the damage was already done. *—PTI*

NZ women get ₹14.95 cr after winning T20 WC

WELLINGTON, 21 OCT

Members of the New Zealand White Ferns cricket team which beat South Africa by 32 runs in the final of the women's Twenty20 World Cup in Dubai on Sunday will split prize money of around $2.3 million (Rs 14.95 crore).

That works out at around $1,55,000 or NZD 2,56,000 per team member, a life-changing windfall for players who for years have struggled for years to achieve financial parity with their male counterparts.

New Zealand's first-ever victory in the World Cup of cricket's shortest format was a massive surprise.

The White Ferns had lost 10 consecutive T20 matches before beating South Africa in a warm-up match. That pre-tournament success proved a turning point for New Zealand who beat India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, losing only to Australia on the way to the semifinals.

South Africa ousted six-time champion Australia in a massive upset in the semi in which New Zealand beat the West Indies. New Zealand made 158-5, batting first in the final, helped by Suzy Bates who made 32, Amelia Kerr who made 43 and Brooke Halliday who made 38. Kerr then took 3-24 and Rosemary Mair 3-25 as New Zealand restricted South Africa to 126-9.

"Pretty unbelievable to be honest," Mair said. "Coming into the tournament all the odds were against us so for the group to bounce back like they have is unbelievable. "We just care so much about each other. We've been through a lot of lows in the last 18 months, and we've just stuck by each other and kept working hard for each other."

Captain Sophie Devine was leading the New Zealand team for the last time. She and Bates have played in all nine T20 World Cups since the first in 2009. New Zealand reached the final of the first two tournaments in 2009 and 2010, losing to Australia on both occasions.

"This means everything to us," Bates said. "When you play team sport, you want to be a world champion. "We've fought our way back to the top. (Devie) has been so outstanding leading this team... so calm and believing in us. We'll probably have a cuddle for even longer later because there's been some dark times that only the people in the (locker room) understand." *—PTI*

Each member from the New Zealand team will get at around $1,55,000 or NZD 2,56,000 PHOTO: X/@ICC

B'desh slump on opening day of 1st Test against SA

MIRPUR, 21 OCT

Bangladesh slumped on the opening day of the first cricket test against South Africa reaching 60-6 at lunch on Monday. Fast bowlers Wiaan Mulder (3-22) and Kagiso Rabada (2-16) sliced through the Bangladesh batting order after Najmul Hossain Shanto won the toss and opted to bat first. Mulder took a wicket in each of his first three overs to put Bangladesh in early trouble. The rot began with the dismissal of Shadman Islam who played a needless shot against a delivery that moved away to edge to second slip for a duck — no runs scored. Mominul Haque was caught behind, while Shanto flicked straight to short mid-off, leaving Bangladesh at precarious 21-3 in the sixth over.

Rabada then got in to act, rattling the stumps of veteran Mushfiqur Rahim (11) for his 300th wicket in test cricket. In doing so, he became the sixth South African bowler to achieve the feat.

The situation went from bad to worse for the hosts as Rabada got the better of Liton Das, caught at gully for one. On the stroke of lunch, left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj trapped Mehidy Hasan leg-before wicket for 13.

Opener Mahmudul Hasan, one of the three changes of Bangladesh from the previous test, was the only batter to show resistance to remain not out on 16 off 86 balls. Aiden Markram is leading South Africa in the opening test of the two-match series with Temba Bavuma absent through injury. The Proteas are aiming to end a 10-year drought on the sub-continent after failing to win any of its past 13 tests there. *—PTI*

East Bengal players during practice PHOTO: X/@EASTBENGAL_FC

East Bengal hunt for ISL season's first victory

BHUBANESWAR, 21 OCT

Odisha FC would look to take advantage of home conditions to bounce back from back-to-back defeats while East Bengal would aim to snap a five-match losing streak when the two struggling teams square off in an Indian Super League game here on Tuesday.

The two sides would seek to immediately find their footing in this campaign since the Red & Gold Brigade are yet to open their account, whereas the Juggernauts sit at the 10th spot with four points from as many matches. A duel between these two eastern outfits often produces fireworks, and the fans at the home turf of Odisha FC must be gearing up for an end-to-end battle at the Kalinga Stadium. Odlsha FC have a lot of confidence to draw from their seven-game-long unbeaten streak against East Bengal, in which they have struck 23 goals. With the Kolkata side giving away two goals per match on average in this campaign, it is to be noted that the Juggernauts have struck at least twice in each of their last seven home games, thus setting an exciting match-up altogether. East Bengal have faced defeats six games in a row now, five of them this season and one to close out the previous campaign. Only NorthEast United FC (10), Hyderabad FC (8) and Jamshedpur FC (7) have lost more games in succession in the ISL than the Red and Gold Brigade.

With this being Oscar Bruzon's second game in charge of East Bengal, the coach would want the team to adapt to his plans and pounce upon an Odisha FC unit that is yet to operate at the optimum levels under Sergio Lobera's watch. East Bengal FC have some sharp strikers such as Dimitrios Diamantakos and Cleiton Silva in their ranks. They can launch offence at the Odisha FC defence from set-pieces -- a facet of the game that Lobera will have to set his team up for diligently. *—PTI*

CARLSEN STAR ATTRACTION AT NEXT MONTH'S TATA STEEL CHESS INDIA

KOLKATA, 21 OCT

World No. 1 Norwegian Grandmaster Magnus Carlsen will be the star attraction in the sixth edition of Tata Steel Chess India to be held here from 13 to 17 November.

It will be Carlsen's second appearance in the tournament. He had earlier participated in 2019 and had gone on to clinch the title.

A strong Indian contingent, following its golden performance at the Chess Olympiad in Budapest recently, will see the likes of Arjun Erigaisi, R Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi among others competing in the prestigious event.

Nihal Sarin and S L Narayanan are the other Indian players who will be in action in the 'Open' category. Like previous editions, the tournament will have the 'Open' and women's categories with same the format -- rapid and blitz -- and will have equal prize money for both sections.

India will be represented by Koneru Humpy, R Vaishali, D Harika, Divya Deshmukh and Vantika Agrawal in the women's category. Chess legend Viswanathan Anand will continue his association with the tournament as its ambassador. "Looking forward to being back at Tata Steel Chess India. It has become the marquee event in India. This year brings the best of the world headed by Magnus Carlsen," said Anand.

"I am particularly excited that the women's event will have the best of Indian chess. This year has been a celebration of Indian chess and this event will be a fitting tribute." *—PTI*

Magnus Carlsen PHOTO: X

SECURITY CONCERNS

Al-Nassr's game moved from Iran to Dubai

WASHINGTON, 21 OCT

Cristiano Ronaldo and Al-Nassr's The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League Elite game with Esteghlal of Tehran on Tuesday will be as closely watched in India as it is in Saudi Arabia and Iran.

AFC said in a statement released last Tuesday that Esteghlal had to move its home fixture with Al-Nassr to the United Arab Emirates city of Dubai due to the security situation in Iran.

The decision was greeted by surprise in India as, on 7 October, the AFC ruled that Mohun Bagan Super Giants of Kolkata had been "considered to have withdrawn" from the second tier AFC Champions League Two for refusing to travel to Iran to play its 2 October fixture against Tractor SC in the northwestern city of Tabriz.

It is not only Al-Nassr's game that has been relocated. Tractor's home game against Ravshan of Tajikistan, scheduled for Wednesday, has been switched to become an away tie. Iran's national team also had to move its Oct. 15 World Cup qualifier against Qatar to Dubai.

"...(Mohun Bagan) notes that the AFC has indeed recognised the volatility of the situation in Iran and as such, has rescheduled or shifted venues for several games," a spokesperson for Mohun Bagan told Associated Press, adding that the confederation had taken the same geopolitical instability into account that the club had. "Failing to apply the same standard to Mohun Bagan would result in unequal treatment by the AFC."

According to the spokesperson, Mohun Bagan had made a request to the AFC that the game's date or venue be changed before it decided not to travel. "We consistently communicated concerns about the volatile and unsafe conditions in and around Iran, particularly regarding the safety of players and staff," the official added. *—PTI*

AFC said that Esteghlal had to move its home fixture with Al-Nassr to the United Arab Emirates PHOTO: X/ @AlNassrFC_EN